

CHRONICLES OF WESTERLY

A Provincial Sketch

By the Author of

"CULMSHIRE FOLK"—"JOHN ORLEBAR"—Etc.



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CHRONICLES OF WESTERLY

“Euerie man dwellynge on this Æarth is a pilgrym eyther towardes
Blesse or els towards Payne.”—Sir JOHN OLDCASTLE.

“Human portraits faithfully drawn are of all pictures the wel-
comest.”—THOMAS CARLYLE.

“Grief and joy and hope and fear
Play their pageants everywhere.”

—THOMAS CAMPION.

CHRONICLES OF WESTERLY

A PROVINCIAL SKETCH

BY THE

AUTHOR OF 'CULMSHIRE FOLK,'
'JOHN ORLEBAR,' 'THE YOUNG IDEA,'
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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TO THE READER.

In the last chapter of 'Culmshire Folk' occurs the following passage:—

"Mind, Blanche," said Lady Culmshire, "don't make a little goose of yourself about him. He is probably not going to die every time he cries; and, remember, when he is able to walk, let him go about, just as he likes, without mufflers and gloves: the most beautiful sight in the world is a fine chubby brown boy, well toasted by the sun."

In the first chapter of these 'Chronicles' you will make the acquaintance of the object of her ladyship's solicitude, in the person of the irrepressible lieutenant. Other names will be familiar to the readers of 'Culmshire

Folk' and 'John Orlebar'—as, for instance, Tynte, Tiptop, and Stole; but, like the lieutenant, they are all of a later generation; and it is not by any means necessary that either book should be read, before or after this one.

And now a last word before you fall to. I do not call this page a "preface," because, when a man writes a preface to a work of fiction, he has, generally, a hobby to ride, a fad to support, a theory to advance, or a moral to inculcate. I am neither theorist, faddist, nor moralist; I have no hobby; and what I have to say won't take long to write or read.

It is improbable that I shall have time and opportunity to perpetrate another book; and I can now, without the risk of being misjudged as to motive, return my sincere thanks to those proverbially terrible fellows, the critics, who have dealt with me in a manner so utterly at variance with their

conventional reputation as a class. An anonymous author, not personally known to any one of them, has no way of expressing his indebtedness but in print. No man, rightly constituted, is indifferent to disinterested praise; and it would be a poor compliment to those critics to resort to self-depreciation, in which nobody believes. It is pleasant to be liked: that's all about it.

I have an idea that the author has some indefinable and mystic psychological affinity with his books and their fate; and that, if he succeeds in amusing a circle of readers, the laughter-waves reach him somehow, and the cumulative mirth-force comes back, in some subtle way, to cheer him. This may be only a "fond and foolish fancy," like too many other beliefs; and, even if true, the converse of it must be equally so. Well, in the event of this latter contingency, I must only hope that my censor—comparing

a small man with a great—may be able to say no worse of me than Seneca said of Quintilian: Abundat dulcibus vitiis.

I know my chief fault, and I apologise for it: I can't stick to the highroad. I am a very desultory sort of fellow—always was. I wander off, down by-ways and lanes; and, meeting people who interest me, I stop for a chat while the more important personages wait. This is unpardonable, I know; but, I can't avoid it for the life of me; and the reader has, therefore, much and very just cause of complaint. This confession may serve to warn off those who only find satisfaction in a skilfully constructed story.

So, without what John Aubrey calls "farther additiments," I make my bow.

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CHRONICLES OF WESTERLY:

A PROVINCIAL SKETCH.



CHAPTER I.

THE ROUTE.

“No glew like the glew of good fellowship.”—BURTON.

“Cool-headed men,
And good at setting battle in array.”—W. MORRIS.

THE 201st had been a long time at Westerly-on-Sea, and was looking out for a change, when—suddenly—it came.

There were many worse quarters than Westerly, as the regiment would find, to its cost, before very long; for, although it was not a large place, there was plenty of fun and amusement to be got out of it—

fishing, shooting, and courting, dancing and lawn-tennis.

To be sure, it was only a town; but it was within six miles of a city—Wraxeter, where there were a grand cathedral, and some fine old canons and fossil clerics with handsome and agreeable daughters. The bishop's palace was only a mile and a half or so out of the town; and the social and trade advantages to be derived from the presence and patronage of the Right Reverend Dr Quodlibet, in the neighbourhood, were appropriated, almost entirely, by Westerly.

It was a stirring place compared to Wraxeter—had good shops, sea-air, and soldiers; while its rival—if rival it could be called—had nothing but age to recommend it. Westerly went to Wraxeter just as a young relative visits an old one from whom advantages are to be derived, or as a matter of traditional regard and duty—nothing more. Gaiety was not indulged in at the latter

place, or frivolity countenanced there. When the soldiers went on Sundays, with invitations for the fair ones of the cathedral precincts, they always put up their drags, dogcarts, and tandems at "The Crown," and attended divine service as a means to an end. Even the railway, which had its terminus at Westerly, passed Wraxeter by at a respectful distance; and though there was a station called Wraxeter Road, the easiest way to get to Wraxeter was from Westerly—as you generally had to walk from Wraxeter Road, there being no public conveyance to the ancient city. The palace was nearly as old as the cathedral, and was built, in order to command a good view of the sea, long before Westerly existed or was thought of. It served now as a connecting-link between trade and theology—between the shop and the church. The bishop was a friendly and popular man, and gentlemen's seats were numerous round about.

Notwithstanding that the regiment had been made much of by the inhabitants of both places, the declaration of war was a source of the greatest satisfaction to that gallant corps—commonly called the “Do-or-Dies” (*alias*, “D.D.’s,” or “Divinity boys”); for the simple but soldierly reason that it stood first on the roster for foreign service.

Major Tynte was busy writing, looking into official documents, and arranging about the thousand and one things—regimental and other—which an officer on the eve of departure must of necessity have to look to at such a time, when the clanking of a scabbard, and the sound of rapid footsteps coming up the barrack stairs, disturbed him.

The major looked up, his cigar in the corner of his mouth, and the nearest eye closed to keep out the pungent cloud which arose from it.

“Well, Fitz, my boy—how are you?” he said. “Ah! times are changed, and for the worse too, since I was a sub.”

“How so?”

“By Jove! just you think for a moment! Here’s a young pup not yet even fledged——”

“I was not aware, major,” retorted Fitz, who knew from experience to whom the flattering noun was meant to apply, “that puppies grew feathers at any stage of their existence, even under the most favourable circumstances.”

“Not even Irish ones?” laughed the major; “well, no. I beg your pardon. Permit me to be more exact.”

“Oh, of course; please yourself about it—I don’t mind.”

“Here’s a young pup,” went on the major, “actually not *haired* yet, though he goes through the form of a regulation shave three times a-week; who has been gazetted a

little over twelve months ; who thinks nothing of rushing unceremoniously into the sanctum of one of the strictest disciplinarians in his regiment, and—stop—yes, of actually seating himself uninvited—hanged if he doesn't!—and, I suppose, expects to be offered a cigar into the bargain.”

Suiting the action to the word, the genial major presented the case, and watched his irrepressible visitor spinning a chair on one leg and finally settling down into it, with both his own long ones stretched well out in front, his arms on the back of it, and his chin on his arms.

There hovered a smile on the good-natured features of the speaker, altogether at variance with the words ; but the big sub didn't trouble himself to note either the one or the other.

“Give us a light now, major, while you are about it. Never do things by halves. Thanks ! It's the nature of the beast, you

know; and what can't be cured must be endured."

"Well," responded Tynte, resuming his own cigar and his pen, "I suppose you are right. *Il faut hurler avec les loups.*"

Fitz put on a thoughtful expression, going over the quotation in his mind, and ultimately giving it up as a bad job.

"Hang it all!" he said, "it is deuced bad form—you must know that, of course—to speak in an unknown tongue to a—guest." Here he withdrew the weed from his lips, and calmly contemplated the end of it, while he waited for a reply.

"I was only giving emphasis to your own sentiment about the nature of the beast. A bad example is catching. However, I might have known that you didn't shine in your French at Sandhurst."

"No, faith! Right there—for once. I always found it hard enough to speak my own language," said Fitz, apologetically.

“Which do you call your own—Irish?”

“Well, no; English, I suppose.”

“I thought you had cheek enough to say so.”

“I mean by courtesy or adoption, of course; if I could only manage to shake off the brogue, I shouldn’t make such a bad fist of it. Grammar is quite a secondary consideration, I find.”

“They don’t bother about it at Sandhurst.”

“You’re always dead nuts on Sandhurst.”

“Only Sandhurst could produce Fitzmaurice Bateman of ours. I attribute the present state of the army to its confounded levelling-up system, which is the result of pure and unmitigated cram. A young fellow just joined should assume a virtue if he has it not, and show outward respect to his superior officers, even if he doesn’t feel it.”

“I like that, major. Look here”—and

he raised his big sledge-hammer arm slowly, with the cigar standing straight up between his fingers—"if you were to step tomorrow into the shoes—bunions and corns and all—of the old chief, every sub in the regiment would just come over here and congratulate you on promotion, with a hearty slap on the back."

Here he resumed his smoke.

"Stay where you are — you need not physically illustrate the assertion," said Tynte, observing a sudden movement, which seemed to indicate that he was about to do so; "I can quite imagine the slap on the back—don't mention it. I don't like anything bordering on insubordination."

"Well, you just make the best of it, and don't preach any more. You can't tell how soon the fortune of war may give us the opportunity of testing the truth of my statement."

"I hope the fortune of war will do

nothing of the kind, you cold-blooded rascal. The supposition involves disaster to too many gallant fellows, to say nothing of the chief himself, who is a tip-top soldier—not the less so because he keeps a tight hand on a young unkempt Kerry colt let loose upon us from the wilds of Ballybog.”

“Oh!” exclaimed the incorrigible sub, throwing his right leg back again over the chair and changing his position in a way which was indicative of disgust—for somehow there was expression in every movement of this big but not ungainly son of Anak and Hibernia. “I’m not supposed to go down on my knees and worship the old beggar, or pray to him, same as a poor devil of a curate has to do to Bishop Quodlibet.”

“Curates don’t do anything of the sort. You are getting out of your depth.”

“Well, chaplains. I thought that was

the orthodox way to make sure of being a rector or a dean or an archdeacon."

"Bosh ! You know as little about Church discipline as you do about that of the army, I fear. But, in any case, I can tell you this, that were it not for the Bateman traditions in the regiment, my boy, and the high regard in which the chief holds your father, he would have called you over the coals seriously before now. Take that to heart."

"Oh, I daresay. I'm grateful to the old cock for his forbearance, certainly, and all the rest of it. I'll fight like a black for him when the time comes, and obey orders and all that, and harbour no petty spite, but magnanimously let bygones be bygones. Meanwhile, he may go to blazes ! Hang it all ! what more can you or he expect ?"

"That's your philosophy, is it ?" said the major, laughing outright. "There is nothing to be added to it, except the advice to keep the muzzle on as much as possible

while there is no legitimate fighting to be done. Lister likes 'varmint dogs' of war, but he likes them well trained—which you are not. 'Down shot,' 'up to heel,' and all that."

"That's all just because I got fast in the commercial traveller fellow at the hotel, I suppose, the night I joined."

"And very nearly had yourself in hot water," said Tynte. "I'd have put you under arrest, and have walked into you pretty smartly if I had been your colonel, my sweet infant."

"Oh, stuff! On the contrary, you'd have lent me a hand if you had been anywhere within reach. No use your sermonising, major. The cap doesn't fit." And Fitz rose, pushed back his chair, and leisurely walked to the open window.

He was physically a fine sample of the young officer. Tynte, who was really warmly attached to the unruly sub, could not but

admire the width of his broad shoulders, and had no misgivings as to how Fitz would acquit himself when hand-to-hand fighting had to be done; he was, in fact, every inch a soldier.

“By Jove, major!” said he, looking out, and then speaking back over his shoulder in a half-whisper, “I say, here’s Garth down below, just come out to contemplate the barrack-square, sitting on the window-sill in his usual mood, with arms folded and eyes no doubt in a fine frenzy rolling—if we could only see them.”

Fitz cast about him at once for some missile. The nearest thing to his hand was a small softly bound regulation drill-book in red, belonging to the major, which lay within easy reach; this he instantly appropriated, and leaning cautiously out, took aim, and dropped it on the unoffending head of Captain Garth, knocking that distinguished officer’s cap over his eyes, and

a small brown cutty-pipe — which it had taken some time to colour — out of his mouth at one and the same time. A strong expletive from below followed this successful exploit, succeeded in a few seconds by a “double” up-stairs on the part of the captain, who, from a point of vantage on the landing, hurled back the drill-book through the open door at the head of Fitz, catching him dexterously on the ear, from which the book rebounded, and falling on the table, upset the ink over some of Tynte’s papers.

“I’d have sworn it was you, you untamable savage,” said Garth, making a rush towards him.

“Pax! Garth, pax!” shouted Fitz, backing into a corner, and presenting the four legs of an uplifted chair to the enemy. “Swear not at all. Major, I’m really very sorry. Let me mop it up. I’m afraid you have done no end of mischief, Garth. What

a confoundedly unruly and impulsive chap you are! A fellow can't touch you but you must strike fire."

"The sooner you make it up the better for me," put in Tynte, ruefully, endeavouring to educate the spilt ink with a pen to travel in a particular direction, while he held the bottle at the edge of the table ready to receive it. With that perversity peculiar to spilt ink, it took a sudden turn just when it shouldn't, and spurted out on the major's sleeve.

"Deuced provoking," grinned Fitz; "don't laugh at your superior officer, Garth. The major is rather touchy on that point. Hand him over the blotting-paper. That's right; make yourself useful. We were having, before this uncalled-for intrusion, a most interesting discussion on a matter which was growing too deep for the major, and you just broke the continuity of my argument. I've lost the thread completely."

Garth looked up, and so did Tynte, and both laughed.

“What’s amusing you?” inquired Fitz; “don’t keep it all to yourselves.”

“It wouldn’t require a very abstruse discussion to get you out of your depth, I take it,” said Garth.

“Wouldn’t it? You say that because, just out of sheer modesty, I have hidden my light under a bushel up to this; but, by Jove! I’ll not do it any longer—I mean to come out. You should have heard Tynte and me on the education question—that’s all. We got so hot about it, that I had to go to the window for fresh air, and that’s how the whole accident came to happen. I was just emphasising an observation, when I let fly the book, and it went the wrong way, just as a crumb of bread does in a fellow’s throat sometimes.

“Exactly! How can you, major, explain such a phenomenon as Fitz? Is he the

result of race or climate or genealogy, or all three mixed—or what? Why does it exist at all, or to what class or genus does it belong?”

“Oh, I give it up as a hopeless problem. Our knowledge is too limited to get us logically out of such a crux as he.”

“Talking about pedigree and ancestry, now that you have started the subject; what is bred in the bone, and all that sort of thing—I was going to enlighten you about the influence of heredity on character. Oh, fellows may laugh, of course; but I’ll give you an instance, and you can make what you like out of it. Hodman, of the 210th—you knew Hodman, Tynte? He was deuced fond of preserves.”

“Yes, I remember. We used to chaff him unmercifully about it.”

“We used. Well, his favourite preserve was plum jam, and he always spelt it *plumb jamb*.”

"I don't see the point — quite," said Garth.

"Nor I either," put in the major. "If it comes to spelling, three-fourths of us can't have had grandfathers. Your theory won't hold water, Fitz."

"Won't it? There you go as usual, off at a tangent, generalising before you have data to go upon. Can't you let me finish first? Hodman's great-grandfather was a stone-mason, his grandfather became a builder, and his father rose to be an eminent architect. Now, how the deuce can you account for Hodman's use of technical terms to convey the idea of a potted preserve, except through his pedigree? You may laugh."

"That opens up quite a new field of research," said Tynte, exploding with laughter, in which Garth joined; "but without in the slightest degree doubting your word, my dear Fitz, I must say that I should like

some slight confirmation of the facts, such as they are, because I don't believe one word of the story."

"I'm sorry for you, then—that's all. I am convinced myself that investigation would reveal the additional fact of the stone-mason's wife, or the builder's wife, or Hodman's own mother, having been a pastry-cook. This would account for the jam. Oh, you may laugh, of course—so may Garth; but take his own case. He never gets sea-sick. Why? Clearly because his grandfather, or great-grandfather (I forget which), was an admiral! There you go, guffawing again! Why, I could easily give you much more convincing facts—yes, facts," said Fitz, bobbing his head to avoid a fizzing fusee; "hard facts. Dr Barnes told me, in confidence, that when Tiptop gets——"

The entrance of a fourth person at this stage of the conversation created a break,

and gave the major a pretext for turning the subject of discussion into another channel, in which he hoped to find a rock ahead sufficiently formidable to check the flux of words on the part of the lieutenant.

“How about Sparks?” said the major; “just look at him! The biggest scamp in the regiment, next to yourself. He’s had a bishop for a father; that cuts against your theory.”

“Does it?—not necessarily. The paternal Sparks might not have been—strictly—well—orthodox—don’t you know; eh, Sparks?”

The young man addressed was not one of many words. He put on a broad grin, winked, and wagged his head. “I told you so,” said Fitz, triumphantly. “If the Right Rev. Dr Sparks had been strictly evangelical, Sparks of ours would have been a parson.”

The bare idea seemed so comical to the

individual alluded to, that he crowed rather than laughed, and ejaculated "By Jove!"

"The fact of it is," said the major, "you must really, Fitz, at times be off your head."

"And you'll probably find, sir, on investigation," said the suddenly inspired Sparks, "that he had an Irish ancestor who lost his."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, shut up!" pleaded Tynte.

"Of course the majority of you are of a sceptical turn of mind," went on Fitzmaurice Bateman; "that's your misfortune, not my fault. I can tell you one more curious fact about this same Hodman: make the most of it. When Dawkins came in for his family title, by the deaths of two uncles and a nephew, or something of that sort, Hodman wrote a letter—I saw it—congratulating him on being raised to the *pierage*! Now, there is the mason ancestor again—*plumb*, *jamb*, *pier*," and he ticked them off on his fingers. "Some people won't be convinced, like our

old chief, who never will take a fellow's statement off-hand."

"Why do you say that of the colonel?" asked Garth. "That's too bad: it's unjust. The very last—what shall we call it?—bouncer, or anecdote you gave us at mess, about that fellow who put his head out of one train and had it cut off by another, he implicitly believed. The major will bear me out in this."

"I do, fully."

"He just turned to me and said, 'I'm quite sure it is a literal fact, and *it must have been Bateman to whom the accident happened*, just before he joined.' What greater indication of large-hearted and child-like credulity could you expect than that? and still you are not happy, nor grateful!"

"I confess, after that, I feel small," said Fitz, "though I suppose I don't look it. The old beggar always sets everything down

as a yarn. He is the most credulous old boss I ever came across, on some points; while on others, Old Nick himself would not convince him."

"You seem to be the biggest puzzle he has ever had to encounter, in his military experience, up to this at all events," said Sparks.

"Allow me to remark that life is full of puzzles, big and little. If I don't greatly mistake, somebody or other, probably Shakespeare—he has anticipated all the profound thoughts that occur to me from time to time—has discovered that life itself is a puzzle. I find puzzles everywhere. There you are, for instance, a grey-headed man at, say, thirty-five (if I understate the age don't correct me), while the major, bless him! appears to be permitted by an over-indulgent providence to wear his hair of its original hue at the advanced age of, say,—what age shall we say, major?"

"Never mind rushing into these disagree-

able personal matters. Confound your impudence!" said Sparks.

"If I had thought a little more," said the major, "perhaps I might by this time have been able to understand why big boys, as boys, should be so cheeky, unmanageable, and troublesome—why they should be, at the intermediate stage, so utterly different from what we become as men."

"Come! I like that," said Fitz; "there's humility in it, and such a confounded lot of self-depreciation about it."

"You might be able to throw some light on this point, Garth," continued the major, ignoring the big lieutenant.

"Who? I—I give it up," said the captain. "I couldn't tell you any more than I could say why it is that veal—even the best fed veal—is so much more indigestible than, and different in flavour from, beef. But never mind, we'll have our revenge on Fitz, and take it out of him when we get him on board

the 'trooper.' We'll put him on duty every time he gets sick, and have him as limp, respectful, and obedient as you please before he returns."

"If he does return," added Fitz. "Here's to the girls we leave behind us." And he winked at Garth. "I like red hair, major. On my word of honour, I do; no humbug. Don't blush, any of you."

"I haven't the most remote notion of what you are driving at, any more than I have of blushing."

"I say, look here, Fitz," put in Garth, coming to the rescue; "draw the line somewhere. Woman is our fate; and you don't know how soon your own turn may come. Have some outward respect for that sex to which one's mother and sisters belong, to say nothing of one's maiden aunts from whom there are expectations—if you have none for your superior officer, and no sense of propriety."

“ I merely remarked that I liked red hair—so does the major. This is a free country (or is erroneously supposed to be), and if I follow his lead—at a respectful distance—I suppose it is all right.”

“ What is he driving at ? ” asked Tynte.

“ I suppose he saw you walking with Miss Harman to-day, and he means to be witty in his personal and usually mild sort of way,” said Sparks.

“ Well, his wit is about equal to his judgment. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, Fitz, you are colour-blind, if that is any satisfaction to you.”

“ Oh, I should have said golden hair, of course—or auburn ; anything but red.” Here he went off at a tangent, and broke out into song :—

“ Oh, Biddy Magee
Is devoted to me !
And I’m partial to her, I’ll allow.

She owns an estate,
And a family sate,
With a pig, and a goose, and a cow.
My luck, which was great
 When I met her,
Can only be bate
 When I get her—
For I'm partial to her, I'll allow—
 Sweet Colleen Macree!
Ballybog is the country for me;
 With Biddy Magee
 On my knee,
And her pig, and the goose, and the cow."

CHAPTER II.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

“Verborum tanta cadit vis.”—JUVENAL.

“Troops
To relaxation and repast dismissed.”—GLOVER.

“Lastly stood War in glittering arms yclad.”—BUCKINGHAM.

THE well-known voice of Fitzmaurice Bateman soon attracted kindred spirits, and all who happened to be within earshot made for Tynte's hospitable quarters; consequently, before many minutes the room was filled to inconvenience. There was no resisting the attraction, and discipline was relaxed somewhat on the occasion of the departure of the regiment, as a matter of course. Even the laziest junior threw away his unfinished cigar, and shaking himself together joined

the throng. Once the game was started, a noisy, obstreperous, overwhelming mob insisted on keeping it up. "Bravo, Fitz! Give us another." "Bravo!" again. "One more! Hang it, yes!"—and so on, till at last the victim's patience reached its limit and culminated in a stentorian "NO! Hanged if I do! I call on Spinner for a song!"

Enter the bland and beaming Spinner, amid general laughter; for he had never been known even to hum.

There was considerable trouble in the matter of sitting accommodation, but no more than was quite common, and, under the circumstances, usual; but the commotion served to create a diversion in Spinner's favour, which, coupled with his well-known inability even to croak, served to get him out of a difficulty. He immediately cast about for a seat, seeing others following the same line of action.

Tiptop settled himself down on Tynte's tin uniform-case, and would have done very well there had not another warrior sat down in his lap, which resulted in the bulging in of the case. The window-sill afforded sittings for two more, while another had to content himself as best he could with a helmet-case—no easy matter on account of its peculiar conical shape.

“Now, Fitz,” said Garth, after some sort of order had been obtained, “let's have one more—only one—song. We'll be content to have it out of you now, if you don't make yourself disagreeable, instead of taking a mean advantage when you are sea-sick.”

“That's fair,” said Tiptop, who was a bad sailor, and had done one voyage in a “trooper”; “there's sense and humanity in that. Time is short, and some of us haven't long to live, perhaps. *Jam te premet nox fabulæ-que manes*, &c., &c. Let's thank our stars, at all events, for that consoling certainty of

modern science—the ‘survival of the fittest’; let us also rejoice in that we have one major of ours—the worthy host—who hasn’t made an ass of himself by going in for matrimony and all that sort of thing, and cutting the mess-table with its improving companionship of brothers-in-arms for the society of babies-in-arms. Peg away, Fitz!”

He obeyed; but as his song was not complimentary to that sex which in reality he adored, we will not give it. Its anti-marital sentiments may be gathered from the tenor of the remarks which followed the applause.

“Time enough to think of getting pieced or spliced, or whatever you call it, when a chap is somewhere about seventy—or a shade over.”

“Holloa!” said Tiptop, “what is going to happen next? Hanged if Spinner hasn’t committed himself to an opinion at last on something!” and he patted Spinner patronisingly with his cane—rather harder, how-

ever, than that gentleman seemed to like. Snatching it dexterously out of its owner's hand, he administered a couple of retaliatory blows with considerably more energy than was expected across Tiptop's calves, who had to seek cover behind the ample form of Fitz, and to sue for quarter from this point of vantage.

"I'll retract, Spinner, unconditionally. But I really thought you *had* given a decided opinion."

"So I have, old chap," retorted Spinner, flinging back the cane ; "a very decided one as to your mental capacity, more than once ; only you find it convenient to have a bad memory on this point. I suppose, because the capacity is so low ; however, as you can't be blamed for that, I forgive you."

"Come, that's magnanimous, at all events," put in Fitz.

"Well, it certainly is ; and I am almost disposed, out of sheer gratitude, to wipe out

that bet of five sovs you lost yesterday on Bluebeard."

"Don't you wish you may get 'em!" said Spinner. "Make a virtue of necessity this time. I object to betting, as you know, on principle—when I don't think the outlook is good."

"Well, I booked it, as a matter of form; and I appeal now to Fitz, who is the soul of honour."

There was a general hush to hear the oracle speak.

"I think," said Fitz solemnly, and promptly accepting the position of arbitrator, "if the bet was booked as a mere matter of form, the payment ought to be a mere matter of form also. The decision, you will perceive, is final, but—it settles nothing; that's the beauty and impartiality of it. But I say, Spinner, a fellow as rich as you—excuse me for being so beastly personal, don't you know—should not feel so acutely the deprivation of a few sovs one way or other."

“Shouldn’t he! Excuse me for being equally personal, Master Fitz,” put in the major; “but I won’t have my friend Spinner sat upon in my quarters, at all events.”

“Here! I say, major,” said one of the company, who was of a practical turn of mind, and exceeding uncomfortable on the tin helmet-case, “talk about fellows being sat on! You ought to provide at least seats.”

“Fitz, to do him justice, is the only man who never grumbles,” said the major; “he adapts himself to circumstances, as a soldier should.”

“That’s accounted for by the fact,” said Sparks, “that when he is at home he’s in the habit of accommodating Miss Biddy Magee on his lap, together with a pig, a goose, and a cow—all at once.”

“I wish he’d show us how it was done,” said Spinner. “It is all very well in a song; but the practical knowledge would be of use to us just now. However, chairs or no chairs,

you are a gentleman, major — every inch. You never indulge in personalities, which is more than can be said for some of your impecunious guests. Now look here, Fitz: what has the fact of my not being hard-up got to do with feeling the loss of money one way or other? That is the sort of stuff people talk about wealth. If you pull a hair out of a fellow with plenty on his head, doesn't it hurt him as much as if it had been pulled out of a scantily furnished nut belonging to somebody else?"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Tiptop, delighted at the retort. "Bravo! That's one to Spinner, and a right good one too. Experience shows that it is clearly only the perfectly bald, and quite impecunious chap, who doesn't mind. You can't hurt him."

"It seems to me, Spinner," said Sparks from the window-sill, "that you are placed at rather a disadvantage as to wisdom, and all that sort of thing. A fellow can't have

wisdom, I understand, without experience ; and no chap can ever know the value of money if he hasn't to—borrow it.”

“ How do you explain the glaring contradiction in your case then, Sparks ? You *should* be the wisest man in the 201st, whereas——”

“ Oh, I'm one of those usual exceptions which are always forthcoming to prove a rule.”

Spinner's weak point was believed to be parsimony. Though he was one of the richest fellows in the regiment, he was what is called “ close,” and knew how to take care of his money—not frittering it away on betting and frivolities ; but nevertheless spending it, on the whole, liberally enough—as when there was a ball or extra big demand on the mess, or band subscriptions, or a treat to the men at circus or theatre. He was popular, though he hailed from Manchester. Like Fitz, he was never known to lose his temper, and could stand any amount of chaff.

The two might be taken as fair types of their distinctive classes. One of the oldest private soldiers in the regiment had known Spinner's father when both were street Arabs, and before the latter became an office-boy in the huge establishment which he now owned as senior surviving partner. This fact got to the ears of a corporal, from him to the sergeants' mess, and so travelled to the sergeant-major, and onward and upward till, by some means or other, it got to be known among Spinner's brother officers, very soon after he joined ; but to do them justice, the fact was never insultingly thrown in his teeth—as it would have been if he had been the least bit of a snob. He was not—he was “a character” in his way, and was valued accordingly. The advice which he got from his father was sound if commonplace, and he was ever on the watch to profit by it and follow it. He rejoiced now in the prospect of active service as a means to his end.

“Get to the top of the tree, my boy,” wrote old Spinner; “that’s what has to be done nowadays. If you can’t shin up an oak or a pine, get up a poplar; the timber is good for nothing, but it grows high, and you must be with the climbers. A giddy fellow, who has no head for dangerous ascents, may laugh at the toll you have to pay in the way of rents in your nether garments, but *get up*; and when you reach the top, you’ll be above the eyesight of those who look out for small blemishes; and your comrades, up there along with you, will have enough to do to hold on, and will not, I promise you, take note of such trifles. He that sticks his brush out at the chimney-top for the crowd to stare at, and shouts to make people look, may not be the best sweep; but he gets the most thought of and talked about, and the biggest reward in the way of success.”

The advice given to Fitz by his father when he sent him to Sandhurst was equally

sound from his standpoint, though necessarily of a very different character. “If you are at all inclined to be proud of your descent, my boy—as I believe you are—from worthy ancestors, remember always that the worth which was theirs, you inherit by no merit of your own. You were born to it, just as we are born into particular creeds; but, all the same, you hold it in trust, and you should never allow yourself to forget that you will probably be an ancestor to others of your race. See, therefore, that you leave after you a repute which your descendants may be proud to inherit.”

And surely this is the only true and admirable pride of family. He who, in the common acceptation, is self-made, the first of his race, is not in honour called upon by the exigencies of society to dig up the names and reputations (such as they are) of those who have left no record of anything worth delving for; and he may comfort himself with the cer-

tainty that, if he is without a family muni-ment-room, he is also without the skeletons which too often abide in it.

“Rather have a care,” the paternal Bate-man’s letter went on, “my dear Fitzmaurice, that while another makes a good beginning to his, you don’t make a bad ending to your own pedigree. The world is well stocked with snobs. The most repulsive snob of any is he who boasts of his relationship to live lords. I have known several of these lords, whom the adventitious aid of an ancestral handle to their names has not raised above mediocrity and contempt. He who could boast of such kinship, deserves to find no better. But there are lords to whose repute a mere title can add nothing. Do not speak of your relationship to any of these till you have acquitted yourself so that they will hear of the kinship, if not with satisfaction, at least with unconcern.”

This was a sensible letter, it must be ad-

mitted, and one, moreover, which the healthy young animal to whom it was addressed fully appreciated and understood. He knew that his father was a thorough gentleman and a brave soldier, and had also found out that, if he had the least inclination to be a snob, the army was about the last profession in which to pose as such.

But we must not linger too long in the company of these pleasant fellows. On the eve of their departure for "the front," they were as merry as schoolboys going home for the vacation, and apparently quite heedless of the old saw which gives to every bullet its billet.

The voice of Fitz rang out at midnight as musically as ever; while, responsive to the general call, he sang, "by special request, and possibly for the last time," as Tiptop with grim facetiousness observed, a song which seemed to be an old favourite, beginning:—

“I’m a thoroughbred Paddy,
And proud of it too !
What I can’t avoid doing
I’m willing to do ;
With a heart and a halfpenny always to spare,
And a family motto of ‘Divil may care’—
The owld Irish reading for—‘Never despair!’”

Play on, big boys, until the time for more serious work arrives, and hearts beat high—or cease to beat upon the battle-field. Amid the ups and downs, the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of that strange admixture which goes to make up the sum of this mortal life, it is indeed a wise and all-merciful dispensation of Providence which shuts out the future from our ken, else would the hopes and aspirations of existence be too heavily handicapped for human endurance.

It is given to the novelist only to look into the future, but what the sight discloses he is not at liberty to declare before the appointed time ; at all events, the noise becomes so great in this particular

barrack-room, that at last we are forced to fly.

The country was now in the throes of war, and, as usual, we had entered upon it by underrating the strength and resources of the enemy. Disaster had come upon us unawares, and the nation was in a state of ferment, having been defrauded, by death, of its legitimate victim; and a victim, ever since the days of poor Admiral Byng, John Bull yearns for, and demands as a right, after every serious reverse—as a necessary peace-offering to his wounded pride and self-esteem.

Troops were now being collected from all quarters to repair our disaster, and were being gathered together for speedy embarkation. The garrison-port of Westerly-on-Sea was in a state of wild excitement and abnormal bustle, in consequence of the arrival of horse and foot by every train as well as by the Queen's highway. Hired transports

relieved each other at the quays, each taking off its full complement. Soldiers were billeted in almost every house. Female hearts, as heretofore and since, were beating loud, I have no doubt; but the beating of drums and the braying of trumpets and the clanging of arms made the ears of the most sensitive civilian deaf to these more subtle sounds; and Tommy Atkins, perforce, did his farewells for the most part in dumb show, poor fellow!

All honour to this same Tommy Atkins, old or young! I say parenthetically. Despised and contemned too often in the piping times of peace, when selfish men think only of the counter and the till, and of the profits resulting from a slavish attention to business, he has his innings at momentous times like these; and I for one don't grudge them. He will have them again by-and-by, if he has only the good luck to get home. I say once more, all honour to him! I myself

have had, and always shall have, the scarlet fever. If I hadn't been of the wrong sex to begin with, I should have sought revolutionary glory (without the risk) by marrying into the army. The simple reader may ask, "Why, being then confessedly a male, are you not a soldier?" To which I reply, that possibly I am of a delicate constitution; or a too fond mother may have objected; or I may not have had brains for Sandhurst—still less for Woolwich; or again, soldiering being a profession not self-supporting, there may have been pecuniary drawbacks. Be good enough, my dear sir, to make any excuse for me which does not necessitate my showing the white feather! But all these inquisitorial points are personal matters with which the reader has nothing whatever to do; and even if it should be on the cards that I lack the actual amount of courage, I could hardly be expected to make the damaging admission.

I say again that I fervently hope the scarlet fever may long remain an ailment among the fair sex—nay, more, one which may never abate. Where is there a nobler fellow than a well-conditioned soldier? Familiar with hardship, contumely, and danger; shut out from competency and comfort; ready at a moment's notice to face death, with no other reward, if he should escape it, than a two-and-sixpenny medal on his breast. I confess it makes my blood boil to see, as I have often seen, contempt heaped upon him by a disreputable waiter or a low barmaid. "Third-class refreshment room lower down," or "Sodgers ain't admitted here," and all that sort of thing.

But it was not so at Westerly-on-Sea. It was not in accord at any time, and still less was it in accord just then, with the public sentiment of the place. At the period of which we write, Tommy was being feasted,

honoured, praised, petted, and made much of by everybody, small and great, high and low, without distinction of persons, or classes, or creeds—for there were no Quakers there. And now that links were to be severed and ties broken, there was nothing for it but to kill care and sorrow by jollity and enjoyment.

The time was short and the notice sudden, though not unexpected, and Westerly made the most of it. But one night more remained; and this was devoted to a grand ball—a farewell one—given by the officers of that gallant corps to the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood and town. The non-commissioned officers followed the example of their superiors, and gave a ball too; while the privates were allowed to accept hospitality or to entertain their friends.

Old Colonel Bob Lister of the “Do-or-Dies” had full confidence in his men; and while relaxing the reins of discipline under

such exceptional circumstances, he was quite satisfied that the concession would not be seriously or culpably abused, and that the final muster would be—as it always had been—fully up to the mark and creditable to his regiment.

He made a speech in the barrack square before “breaking off,” which wasn’t long, but was very much to the point all the same. The men were to enjoy themselves but not to get drunk, and every soldier was to put in an appearance, and to “fall in” responsive to the bugle-call.

“No skulking or deserting, or anything of that sort, boys,” he said. “I expect the gallant D.D.’s to maintain its character to the last moment here in England; and I expect it to return to England with its ranks perhaps reduced, but with its reputation increased—as heretofore. But, look here! If I find a man drunk to-morrow morning on parade, by the Lord!”—and he shook his

head and both fists portentously, as he shouted "Break off!"

They all knew what his "By the Lord!" meant. He went by the familiar name of Old Blister in the barrack-rooms, because of his severity, which fitted in so aptly with his initial and surname; yet he was respected by the wildest spirits in the ranks who had come to feel the weight of his punishments, for he was always just, though he was "dead nuts," beyond all doubt, upon drunkards. He never inflicted a penalty on an offender without expressing a regret which he was not ashamed to feel or to display; and it must honestly be confessed that no better "chief" ever controlled a gallant corps than Old Blister—

"An yron man, made of ye yron mould."

CHAPTER III.

A GARRISON BALL.

“Lov’st thou music?
 Oh, ’tis sweet!
 What’s dancing?
 Mirth of feet!”

—THOMAS CAMPION.

“The business of dancing is to display beauty.”—*Spectator*.

BALLS generally, public or private, are a success, for the simple reason that the majority of those who go to them are young, and therefore go prepared to take enjoyment out of them.

That the farewell ball of the gallant “Do-or-Dies” was no exception, goes without saying. What with the decorations formed of rifles, swords, bayonets, and flags—the regimental band—the gay uniforms—brave men and handsome women—it was

simply a brilliant affair; and was declared by the 'Westerly Daily News,' in leader type, to have been the most enjoyable gathering of the sort which had taken place within the memory of the reporter for that long-lived print, who had—if the truth must be told—succumbed early in the evening (having prudently prepared his report beforehand) to the combined effects of brandy and heat; and had retired early to a back bench in the musicians' gallery, where, having been, after much coaxing, induced to go to bed thereon without undressing himself, he compromised matters by merely taking off one boot, to indicate that he was not, as one of the band observed, "in full marching order."

Fitz and Tiptop had worked very hard at the decorations; and their taste and skill did them, it must be frankly owned, infinite credit. Fitz, whose inherent modesty did not lead by any means, as we know, to self-

depreciation, congratulated himself hugely on the result as he looked proudly round him, and took in, with a sweepingly comprehensive grasp of vision, the "gay and festive scene" around him.

"I wouldn't go through it all again, though," he remarked with a suppressed yawn to Tiptop, "for a good deal. In fact, I'd almost as soon go through a campaign."

"Well, I like that," responded Tiptop, languidly letting his eye-glass drop from his eye as he opened it wider with a mild wonder; "a fellow that's never been at a good-sized review talking about a campaign! I like that, Fitz."

"Glad you do! Even that admission is worth something from a worthy whose motto is, or should be, *nil admirari*; but, now I come to think of it, deuce a much experience of fire-eating you have had to brag about either!"

"But I don't brag about it—there's the

difference, my boy ; I don't talk of what I know nothing about."

"Don't you ? Then all I can say is—you must be a far more extraordinary fellow than I am, or else you must be a confoundedly learned one," said Fitz.

"Why ?"

"Because," replied the sub, with a grin, "you are, beyond all doubt, the greatest talker in the regiment ; and if you only talk of what you know something about, the conclusion is obvious, dear boy, to the meanest capacity."

Tiptop laughed now. "At all events," he said, "I don't put on the airs of a field-marshal expecting the thanks of Parliament and of a grateful country, for what others helped me to do. I suppose every girl you spin round the room to-night will be told, with your confounded assurance, how the decorations were designed and carried out by yourself—'alone I did it!'

and all that sort of thing; while we all just handed you up what you called for, and fooled around."

"Not a bit of it! I'll give you the fullest credit for making that crooked star in front of the gallery, you may depend on it."

Tiptop suddenly stopped this banter to feel nervously for his eye-glass; and having captured and replaced it, he changed his position in order to obtain a better view of some beauty who had just entered the ball-room, and was creating a sensation in her immediate circle.

"I tell you what it is," he said, "only for that too generally pervading sensation of mist and moonshine which these airily dressed and charming creatures always bring with them—the glamour of muslin and beaming faces—all the decorations in the world, including my handiwork and yours, Fitz, wouldn't count for much."

Bateman paused to give effect to his reply. "I never knew until now that you

went in for being a second-rate philosopher as well as a talker. Never mind, old boy—here goes for a plunge into the midst of the mist and moonshine;” and he left in search of a handsome partner.

“The force of example,” muttered Tiptop, as he gathered himself together, and prepared to follow. “A fellow’s fancy runs away with him, and he goes for a Juno in these ‘dazzling halls of light,’ to find his partner nothing but a commonplace cloud of soft seductive millinery. This classical retrospect is all very well; but I’m in for it all the same. Ah! Tynte has secured the red-haired girl already! Perhaps Lieutenant Fitzmaurice Bateman of ours isn’t so big a fool as he looks, after all. One must not judge too much by appearances. There may be something up.” He paused now to look around him. “I must go and try my luck with Georgie Collyrium, before she gets snapped up by that insinuating Garth.” And off he went accordingly.

Georgie was the daughter of the leading doctor of Westerly, and had been "out" for—well—for some seasons,—we won't say for how many; there is no use in that disagreeable sort of particularity. She was a first-rate dancer, handsome and well made, and had an extremely fine pair of eyes which she knew how to use to the best advantage. It was pretty certain that she would come in for money, as there was no doubt about the father's wealth; nevertheless she had not succeeded in getting a husband, and was gradually settling down to the position of what is familiarly known as a "garrison hack." She was, despite a strong spice of vulgarity, a favourite on the whole; and she danced so ultra well, that it would have been a loss if she had been taken off to Lumbago Island by Surgeon-Major Colchicum, who had proposed for her the day after her first ball.

If he came back now, and were to ask her

again, would she go? Why speculate? She seemed to enjoy life thoroughly, and was eagerly sought after by dancing males.

On this occasion, though early in the field, Tiptop found his worst fears realised; he was distanced in the race by Captain Garth. However, he was consoled by a nodded promise gasped out over the captain's shoulder as she whirled past; and he found himself rewarded by being booked for the next polka. He wasn't long in finding a substitute for Georgie, *pro tem.*, having very nearly collided with the major and his partner, Miss Harman, in the endeavour to take a short cut towards a particular fair one.

But the major's partner, though introduced to the reader at a public ball and at the end of a chapter, must not be dismissed in so curt a fashion. She is entitled, in our opinion, for many reasons, to a special one all to herself—and she shall have it.

Meanwhile, do we owe an apology to the

strait-laced among our readers—if we have any such—for devoting so many pages to the frivolous subject of dancing? I don't think so. If my memory serves me rightly, even Lucian devotes a whole dialogue to it; and a staid philosopher is thereby converted, and brought to see the error of his ways, and the extent of his prejudice. Nay, more, we are told that even the great Socrates himself not only danced, but actually set about learning to do so after he had arrived at years of discretion! Surely it is a very strong argument in favour of dancing that, on the authority of a Greek classic, this great philosopher was not above asking Terpsichore to do him the honour of a “spin” on the light fantastic toe; and does not the poet ask and answer—

“What are breath, speech, echoes, music, winds—

But dancings of the air in various kinds?”

I forget who the poet was, but that has nothing to do with the sentiment or the argument.

CHAPTER IV.

LAVINIA.

“ Her reason all her passions sway ;
 Easy in company, in private gay ;
 Coy to a fop ; to the deserving free—
 Still constant to herself.”

—POMFRET.

THERE is always a certain amount of prejudice or bias—so the world justly or unjustly maintains—in the opinion which women form of each other, notwithstanding all their protests to the contrary ; and the impartial male, if he wishes to arrive at a just judgment on any particular woman, must form it from his own personal observation—particularly if it should happen that, as in this instance, she is a special favourite among men. Harpastes, when she became blind, would never admit more than that the house

had grown dark ; and we have the authority of Petronius that another, who began by carrying a pet calf about in her arms, ended by persuading herself that it was no heavier as it grew into an ox. From these instances it would appear that, though the ancients were given to fable, they were pretty much of my way of thinking.

“He that complies against his will,
Is of his own opinion still ;”

but you can't convince a woman against her will, no matter what the logic of facts may be ; though she may often convince herself in spite of either facts or logic—just as the fancy takes her. The mental process which the average feminine mind goes through, in judging others of its own sex, leads generally to the conclusion that the one favoured of men is at best but an actress, or has a happy knack of deception which is more than a match for the over-soft and credulous biped whom she is born to rule, and whom it

is her legitimate object to ensnare and capture, and who turns out — it must honestly be owned — a worthless “catch” too often.

But it is only fair to acknowledge that even men disagreed as to whether Lavinia Harman was handsome or ugly, or merely plain; the question was among them an open one, notwithstanding the female assurances that she was a “regular fright.” If, however, their opinions differed about her personal appearance, there was a perfect consensus of sentiment among them as to her good qualities.

She was known to be rich, too, so that she had no lack of devoted worshippers, who vied with each other for the honour of her hand; but she took all this ardour and admiration as a matter of course, and discounted it accordingly. She estimated the general eagerness, on the night of the garrison ball, to secure her as a

partner for each dance exactly at its true value.

She was also known to be very clever, without endeavouring to pose or show off as a blue-stockings; and was one of those rare women to whom men pay instinctively the compliment of not talking nonsense—that is, when they are able to talk sense. They never spoke to her about the weather if they had brains to converse coherently on deeper subjects; and yet the inane type of “young man of the period,” who had no brains worth mentioning, liked her too, because she had that happy art of leaving him perfectly satisfied with himself—a state of feeling which he seems always to look upon as arguing merit on his part. She never snubbed him, but preferred to get out of the company of those who deserved snubbing as quickly as she could. Her wealth made her suspicious; but she kept her suspicions to herself, and went about

among her acquaintances apparently non-observant, but with a keen eye for the reading of character.

Her early history is soon told. She was an orphan—a banker's only child, living now and for many years past with an old maiden aunt whom she loved, and who very conveniently did the *chaperon* on occasions such as this. Her grandfather had been in trade as a local contractor for the supply of necessities to the troops, and ended by becoming the owner of the best town-house in Westerly, and a money-lender on a large scale. The money-lending business assumed, in the hands of his son, a more legitimate and respectable aspect, and gradually developed into banking and financial agencies.

He married into one of the county families—the Deuceatoy-Mandevills—the head of which was in embarrassed circumstances, and whose only daughter had no alternative between absolute want and a rich husband.

The marriage was not a success from either a social or domestic point of view, as the banker came to know by bitter experience. Negotiations with his impecunious father-in-law to take the daughter back for “a consideration” in gold, which would have set him on his legs again, were pending with every prospect of success when the old gentleman died. The banker had to pay the expenses of his funeral, and also the cost of erecting the splendid monument to his memory, which stands in the chancel of Westerly church.

But if plain truth must be told, the banker was considered by his wife to have got far more than his full value—in fact, compound interest—for his matrimonial venture, by being permitted to place on perpetual record in the parish church the fact that he had been the son-in-law of Deuceatoy-Mandevill of Hellverly, and the husband of the last of that long-pedigreed and very blue-blooded race.

The lady was not young when she married; and there was great betting among the clerks in the office, and speculation among matrons, as to whether the Harman race would continue or cease. After five or six years had passed away the point was considered all but settled, when, to the general astonishment of Westerly, the banker found himself likely to become a father. Great preparations were made for the happy event, which, however, turned out to be somewhat disappointing in the result. He had set his heart on a son and heir, but Providence did not see fit to gratify him. Mrs Harman's life was saved with great difficulty. The daughter, instead of becoming a bond of union between them, only proved to be the reverse. The Deuceatoy-Mandevill blood was hot as well as blue, and resented the decay of that affection on the part of the father, which she had previously done her utmost as a wife to estrange.

She died of chagrin and sheer vexation, and her farewell words were but a sardonic expression of the gratification he would have in adding her name to the pompous inscription on the monument.

Rumours got abroad about the domestic life the banker led for many years; but there was no one living, at the time we write of, who had been a witness of the reality save old Aunt Polly Harman, who loved her brother too well ever to tell mortal all she knew. Fortunately Lavinia was too young to remember anything.

Of course the past was raked up, as far as it was known, now and then at social scandal gatherings, by a few of the oldest inhabitants. The most malignant of the bank officials used to say confidentially to certain cronies of his, "It's all very well, my dear sir; but you have a man-devil, a deuce, and a hell in the three names: add a woman to it and take your change out

of the remainder." After this he would shake his head. But he came to a bad end; and the male portion of the community was now so entirely and heartily in Miss Harman's favour, that a few spiteful old crones, with the proverbial want of charity, could make no head against her popularity.

She was not offensively strong-minded, but she interested herself warmly about everything in the way of improving the social and moral condition of the poor—hospital work, nurse-training, reading-rooms, coffee-palaces, science classes, lectures, and what not. She was, in fact, as she deserved to be, a power in Westerly; and learned men whom she brought down from London to advise and help on the work, found in her a "marrowy vein" which delighted them.

Even the bitterest enemies she had among the Westerly girls were obliged to acknowledge that if her hair was red it was all her

own; but she got little credit from them for this, because she couldn't, they said, "get any false hair to match it." She didn't paint, they also acknowledged; but Miss Grumblethorpe accounted for this by explaining that her face was like a turkey-egg, and that freckled people never could paint, as it showed up the freckles so dreadfully. She was an authority, as she painted herself; and hoped to succeed by her skill in the art of decoration in captivating a broken-down, pauperised, purblind dragoon, of good family but bad character, who had already proposed for and been promptly rejected by Lavinia. Miss Grumblethorpe had no time to lose; and she held the opinion that after all it was better to have a man without money than money without a man, as doubtless Miss Harman would come to know.

Lavinia didn't give her own sex the satisfaction of being in any way eccentric. She

followed the fashions as they changed. They could not call her "dowdy," because she showed her uncommon good sense by merely following these fashions at as great a distance, and with as little extravagance, as was consistent with not making herself in any way peculiar or remarkable. This was specially the case on the occasion of a public ball like the present. And she was not given to wearing much jewellery. Some people said she was old, but she wasn't; for she could not be more than twenty-two or three, notwithstanding Georgie Collyrium's assertion to Spinner (whom she was conducting through the mazes of "The Lancers") that "unless she was old she couldn't possibly have had time to read all the stupid books that she had got through and knew all about." This argument might have been conclusive if put before Lieutenant Fitzmaurice Bateman, who never went beyond his own experience for conclusions;

but Spinner held out on the question of age, and added a rider declaring Lavinia to be "simply charming."

"Well, that's not bad," said Georgie, "considering that you have not been half-a-dozen times in her company. And I suppose you think her pretty too—you men have such queer notions."

"No, I don't," replied Spinner, promptly—"not half so pretty as you, 'pon honour." This was an effort to recover lost ground.

Georgie swallowed the compliment voraciously, and looked as if it agreed with her.

"Some people are always raving about her. It is quite absurd to listen to them; and it is quite a relief to find one man who considers her plain. I think I'll tell her. I'm very intimate with her, you know. Besides all that, she's a sort of girl who won't mind."

"You must not do anything of the kind,"

said the lieutenant, becoming seriously frightened.

“Why?” asked Georgie. “Goodness gracious! don’t look so very much alarmed. Are you afraid of her?”

“No; but I don’t think her plain. I never said she was plain. I said I didn’t think her pretty—that’s not the word to apply to her at all. I think her simply the most charming person, present company always excepted, I have ever met.”

This compliment was not assimilated by Georgie, it rather disagreed with her. “Oh, stuff!” she retorted, banteringly but angrily. “Get away!” and she flipped at him with her hand, which seemed to become suddenly alarmingly loose at the wrist. “I have no patience with you men. You’re all just the same—every one of you—especially in your regiment. I’m sure I’m glad you are going away,” and she dropped into a seat, considerately making room for him by her side,

with an alacrity at variance with her words. "You ought to be made do penance by standing; but I don't like to punish you too severely. It's a good thing that we girls are not vindictive."

Having some regard for truth, he wisely left the assertion undisputed; but it may be presumed that the gallant soldier was well within the mark when he called one of the sex charming—there was no word that suited Miss Harman better. Still on this occasion I am bound to admit that the glamour of her influence seemed to exercise but a very transitory power over Lieutenant Spinner, in the presence of, and close proximity to, Georgie Collyrium—such is the inconsistency of the male biped.

I think it is Plutarch who tells of one who would have borrowed a brand from another's fire to rekindle his; but finding the neighbour's hearth so comfortable, sat down by it and forgot his own.

Georgie talked sixteen to the dozen, and had (with her mother) to be escorted to the refreshment-rooms and back before she shook him off, and wandered in search of fresh woods and pastures new. Spinner was in the army, to be sure—there was a great deal in that, and she gave it due weight; but he appeared to be sometimes in the moon, which was trying to her. However, we must not give Georgie too much space in a chapter devoted to another, lest we achieve but the doubtful success of Protogenes, who, when he had painted his masterpiece, filled in the background with a partridge, and was disappointed to find that the critics chiefly admired the bird. Plump was Georgie, no doubt, like that much over-rated partridge; but there was a spice of something like vulgarity, as we said, about her, which to some men — the major, for instance — presented a difficulty not easily got over, and which was generally met

in conversation by the phrase, "Not my style."

But there are people not your style or mine, my dear sir or madam, everywhere one turns; and a veracious chronicler must not pick and choose. We are compelled to take the world as we find it, and to keep up acquaintances which we would rather sometimes drop. Those who liked Georgie were largely in the majority, and she went on her way rejoicing.

Some of us are over-refined, and we suffer in proportion to the excess—getting perhaps a more delicate and subtle sense of enjoyment now and then, which compensates for much, and which is at all events the only compensation to be had. Georgie would not have appreciated an ortolan, and would have no hesitation in pronouncing Browning to be "bosh." But, all the same, I would ask you—fastidious as I know you are—not to judge her too harshly. I do assure you

solemnly that I am acquainted with a most estimable person socially and morally, well-bred and otherwise refined, who (incredible as it may appear) not only eats, but actually enjoys, pork-pie. I do not pretend to explain the fact—I merely state it; and I am not quite satisfied that this reprehensible sort of appetite, be it moral or physical or social, does not, after all, exist in the case of every one of us,—you will excuse me for saying so. We have each a different name for it; and in Spanish or Italian (which I don't understand) the thing would sound quite nice and refined, I have little doubt.

CHAPTER V.

LAY.

“I am a man that hath not done your love
 All the worst offices : here I wear your keys,
 See all your coffers locked—keep the poor inventory,
 Your plate and monies ; am your steward—
 Husband your goods.”

—BEN JONSON.

THERE are two lines of business which the College of Arms admits to be “within the pale”—the trade of a wine merchant, and the calling of a banker. Lavinia was still a partner in the firm of Harman & Co., which was carried on for her in a very flourishing condition, under the management of the Co.

He had everything his own way, except that she went through the form of examining the books twice a-year, which he considered to be, as he said, a duty to him, and

also to herself as the only representative of her worthy and respected father. This Co. was a pompous, but otherwise unobjectionable old man; and her doing this with commercial punctuality, minuteness, and patience flattered him. He liked to hear her say that as long as he, Mr Samuel Pipperly, managed her affairs, she had no anxiety one way or other. Pipperly was the soul of honour and honesty; and withal, though apparently simple, he was in reality most shrewd. He all but worshipped Lavinia, and had also sedulously and surely been working his way into the good graces of Lavinia's aunt Polly—with a view to marriage when he was good for nothing else. For he looked at courtship as purely a matter of business, to be pursued steadily and without rash speculation. He had so pursued it, and had at last, after many years, begun to feel that he was thriving in it even beyond his hopes, and might

soon look forward with certainty to a future partnership in which aunt Polly should occupy the subordinate but not less important position of the Co.

All of a sudden Lavinia had recently come to the conclusion that something had gone wrong, or was about to go wrong, with Pipperly—why, she could not tell; but there was something in his manner which indicated unrest of some sort, mental or physical, she did not well know; but it troubled her, and she resolved to have it out with him, “because,” she explained to aunt Polly, “I really fear he must be breaking up.”

“Tut, tut! nonsense, my dear,” aunt Polly said; “that’s a horrid idea.”

Lavinia didn’t know the state of his heart, and aunt Polly only guessed it, but was wise enough to understand that his trouble was not love. Both were kind-hearted and sympathetic creatures, and they felt for him.

Lavinia took the opportunity of the coming round of the day for examining the books, to pluck out the heart of his mystery—she could not feel easy till it was done.

Pipperly's snuggerly at the bank was a comfortable room enough, small like Pipperly himself, and furnished "strictly in keeping"—that is, it had an air of the bald and shiny, blended with a certain aspect of age. The floor was of oil-cloth; the two arm-chairs were of brown leather; the mahogany table had a brown leather top; the big ledgers lying about were close-shaven-looking volumes—worldly Bibles which made to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, for long years past, and which demanded, and indeed awakened respect; the ink-bottle was a shiny flat-bottomed glass one, not given to unsteadiness, and which would have been incongruously mated with the dishevelled and dissipated quill of the counting-house clerk, or of the solicitor's

apprentice. The smooth-handled *magnum bonum* was its fitting companion, and Pipperly used none other. His out-of-door frock-coat hanging up behind the door hadn't a speck on it, any more than the office one which he had on, and which was its complement as to cut and material; the only difference between them was, that the latter had a polished look about it in harmony with its surroundings, and that its edges and seams shone in the subdued light as if they were decorated with silk braid instead of being merely worn.

Pipperly's spectacles were of the long-legged old-fashioned kind having knee-joints, and being provided with feet which held on to his ears in a common-sense business-like manner. The modern double eye-glass could not from the nature of things hold on to his nose, which was a small round button protruding from the centre of a large globe—a keen nose, though it did not look

the character, alive to the slightest sensation of tobacco, beer, or spirits anywhere lurking about the establishment. Indeed it was currently reported, and even admitted save by one natural-born sceptic of the staff, that on one occasion it had detected about the person of the bank runner an odour of brandy-and-water a full week after date; and on investigation it was proved by the admission on his honour of the accused himself, that fully this time had elapsed since he had indulged for purely medicinal reasons. Pipperly's eyes were keen, grey, and searching, but devoid of eyebrows. His mouth was straight, firm, and honest, with a good-tempered look imparted to it by a dimple at each end; and his double chin seemed to be there more to fill up a void between his neck and shirt-collar than to convey an idea of sensuality.

He was scrupulously methodical and clean, morally as well as physically, as became the

trusted head of an exact and trusted house ; and as he sat opposite Lavinia, tapping his spectacles on the cover of the nearest ledger to give emphasis to his words, you would have concluded at once that he was a man to be depended on, and who was a thorough master of his business.

“Well,” said Lavinia, moving back her chair, as the mistress of the house does after dinner to intimate that the meal is over, “now that we have got through our business, I want to tell you something.”

“And that is ?” He clasped his fingers together and bowed.

“That I’m not at all easy about you. Somehow you are not quite yourself lately. You are not as open with me as you used to be ; and you are keeping back something or other because you don’t think I’ll be pleased. Isn’t that really so ?”

“To tell you the plain truth, Miss Harman——”

“Oh, please say ‘Lavinia’; everything appears to be so unusually solemn when you ‘Miss’ me.”

“Well, things *are* solemn—at least they bear that aspect to me, I must confess. I may as well come to the point at once. The fact of it is, I don’t like the new rector.” He spoke very slowly, and his voice fell to a whisper of secrecy as he finished.

“Is that all?” she exclaimed. “Why, neither do I over-much.”

“I am extremely glad to hear you say so: it takes a very considerable weight off my mind.”

“You don’t really think he is going to propose, do you?” she said, laughing.

But old Samuel Pipperly didn’t see the joke, or, if he did, he wasn’t to be thrown off by a false scent. There was no reason why the Rev. Septimus Stole should not propose—for he was young, enthusiastic, good-looking; so was she, in addition to

which she was emotional, energetic, rich—given to all good works. Where could a parson hope to better his lot more than at Westerly, as its rector, and with Lavinia for his wife? Old Samuel, with the instincts of common-sense, saw the opportunity and its possibilities, and was quite sure that the reverend gentleman's mental vision was equally clear. All this was what had troubled him to such a degree as to render it plain to Lavinia that he was "out of sorts." But in addition to this he hated Stole, for another reason to which he gave utterance after a pause.

"The man is a thorough hypocrite, my dear," he continued, "a mean Jesuit—nothing but a Papist in disguise, sailing under false colours; sent here by his superiors to sow the baneful seed in good soil." The metaphor was rather mixed as to sea and land, but the meaning was clear enough. "If he once can get the women with him

he is all right. Naturally, Lavinia, he has begun with you, and I find you as a consequence over head and ears——”

“In love! Oh no!”

“Pardon me,” he said deprecatingly, and still refusing to treat the matter with levity —“no; but in all kinds of parochial work, spending your money and your time in advancing—his interests.”

“That’s unkind. Not his interests, but higher ones.”

He just raised his hand slightly and then dropped it again upon his thigh in a manner which conclusively deprecated controversy; and she yielded out of respect for the old man, who had been to her for so many years a second father; while she was rather amused than otherwise to see what a mountain prejudice can make out of a molehill.

“He is as familiar with you and with everybody,” went on Pipperly, “as if he had been bred and born and brought up in the

parish, instead of being all but a stranger. I don't like that—I never did like that sort of thing. I always suspect silky people.”

Though he looked so unusually solemn, she could not help laughing, because silkiness was the one leading trait in Pippetly's manner, and it seemed so funny that he shouldn't know this, and should despise the quality. “We do not see ourself as ‘others see us,’” she said half involuntarily.

Fortunately he understood the words as applying to the Rev. Septimus, and it was well that they happened to fit in so conveniently.

“Just so ; quite right, my dear. If we did, he would soon understand that I am about the last man he can humbug and mystify with his Popery and nonsense.”

“I am afraid you are letting your zeal run away with your justice,” she ventured to say.

“Am I likely to do that?” he inquired.
“Did I ever do it?”

"I never found you out till now, I confess; but what am I to think? I have never seen the man do anything ritualistic, and I have not heard that any of us girls go to confession. I am quite positive I'll never go."

"How do you know you won't?"

"Because I'm too wicked, and should have so much to tell."

He shook his head gravely.

"But I don't want to treat the subject with levity," she went on. "To be serious, I can't for the life of me see why you should brand the poor man as a Papist. Where is the mark of the beast?"

Mr Pipperly rose, went across the rug, put his hand on her shoulder, and whispered again, "Warner, the fishmonger, tells me that he fasts every Friday."

Then he straightened himself again with a dignity which seemed to imply that what he had stated clinched the matter; after which

he retreated slowly and sat down to watch its effect upon her.

“Now, what do you say?”

“What harm if he does? Why shouldn’t he?”

This was too bad! “‘What harm? why shouldn’t he?’ Don’t you see that such a contemptible creature should be scouted out of society? He isn’t to be trusted. The whole thing is just the same as receiving money under false pretences; or, to put it in another way, a man may dine off turbot or salmon, and claim to be credited with meritorious abstention; that’s his own affair, but he doesn’t take me in with it. Suppose, for one moment, that, from a purely business point of view, our firm represented the other world (if I can ask you to do so without meaning any irreverence); suppose that he came here to meet a sort of spiritual bill against him; suppose we, as his bankers, were to say, ‘You must meet this bill by regular

payments of so many pounds in so many days, and on every day but one we'll take the cash in any way you like to hand it in, but on that particular day we won't give you any credit for a lodgment (however large), unless paid in sixpences ;' suppose, moreover, that our business was exclusively of this class, and that we kept a staff of recording clerks for no other purpose than to debit our customers with breaches of this absurd regulation, what would you think of the concern ? ”

“ I should sell out of it as soon as possible,” she answered decisively and promptly enough to reassure him.

“ Of course you would ! And that's what I just want you to do, or rather I want you to keep clear and not invest in it. I knew you had common-sense enough to see things in a business way when properly put before you. You would not be your father's daughter if this were not so.”

“Accept my parting assurance,” she said, shaking hands warmly, “that I shall be able to take care of myself, and to see through the Rev. Septimus Stole—if he is worth seeing through; and I shall never be fooled into a belief that a dinner of turbot or salmon is not a dinner, but a fast, because eaten on Friday.”

He had recovered his satisfaction with his influence, and was abundantly satisfied.

“You forget,” she said, coming back to the door, “how little power the rector has as yet. We all rush to a garrison ball in spite of his conviction that the devil is fond of dancing and that we run the risk of having him for a partner.”

“Yes, in a red coat, no doubt,” said Pipperly, becoming mildly jocose—“an appropriate colour I admit. Give my very best respects to your aunt, my dear.”

He shut up the big banking Bible with a

reassured expression of countenance, and a decisive bang.

Who was the Reverend Septimus Stole, and did he deserve all this outburst of virtuous indignation on the part of so staid a personage as Samuel Pipperly? or was it sheer prejudice against the cloth—a man of this world against a man of the other—cash *versus* credit? This question I am unable to answer; but I am positive that the reverend gentleman had in no wise troubled himself to form any opinion, good, bad, or indifferent, as to the merits or theological tenets of Samuel Pipperly. His diagnosis was exclusively confined to the other partner in the business, as the old gentleman himself had shrewdly surmised.

CHAPTER VI.

CLERICAL.

" Would I describe a preacher, . . .
 . . .
 I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;
 In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,
 And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste,
 . . .
 . . . as well becomes
 A messenger of grace to guilty men."

—COWPER.

THE Rev. Septimus Stole and Lavinia were diametrically opposed in their views ; yet he entertained the highest opinion of her, and pronounced her to be "a most estimable person." He would indeed have felt most supremely happy if he could only have succeeded in winning her round to his views—so much capability for good did he discern in her character.

To do him no more than fair and simple

justice, he was labouring fervently and hard to attain his end ; but their conversational encounters seemed usually to take an untoward and unexpected turn for which he was not prepared, and terminated always in his discomfiture. He was, notwithstanding the insinuations made by Pipperly, an honest-minded man, though narrow ; and he knew that her nature was not really irreverent, but profoundly the reverse.

She had a mind of her own and a will of her own, and consequently took an independent and original view when she took one at all. She would accept nothing—not even his pet missionary society, for which he acted as the indefatigable secretary and treasurer. It was quite dreadful, she freely acknowledged, to hear of the spiritual darkness of these particular blacks ; but it was, to her thinking, far more awful to contemplate the ignorance, the brutality, and the crime prevailing at home.

“People make a fuss,” she said, “and shudder at the idea of roasting and eating the dead ; and clergymen are sent to try and induce those whose creed this is to change it for another one that keeps the fire up for ever, and burns the living victim eternally. I can quite understand how it is that a noble savage, who slays an enemy in open combat and then eats him, takes such a lot of ‘conversion’ to bring him round to our tenets. In fact, I don’t know how any one advocating the doctrine of the Real Presence can logically approach the cannibal at all ; and of course there must be great expense and much disappointment in the process. I prefer to help home work : the field is large enough. Look at the amount of tormenting, persecuting, and maiming in body and in reputation, that goes on every day around us among the whites !”

A sight that equally affected, if I mistake not, the tender heart of Montaigne, and about

which the vast majority of sensible persons have long since come to a like conclusion.

The Rev. Septimus Stole got to be afraid as well as ashamed to talk to her on the importance of his little “fads,” and contented himself with the conviction that, by tact and civility all round, he would be able to reform the service and ritual of his predecessor ; but he was disappointed.

The ‘Westerly Standard’ was on the watch, and directly charged him with being a Papist in disguise ; or, at all events, with being at best—in contradistinction to his worthy curate, the Rev. Joseph Tinkler—only a half-and-half Protestant ; and it called on the town to be up and stirring, to root him out, to stamp on him ! Furthermore, it went on to hope that Miss Harman, who had always taken such an enlightened interest in parish matters, would not be led away by “Jesuitical machinations,” &c., &c. Stole suspected Mr Pipperly, as indeed do we, of being the

author of this article ; but having no proof, he never breathed a word of his suspicion to any one.

The 'Westerly Standard' was, like the reverend gentleman himself, a new venture in the town. Both had opened an account, too, at Harman & Co.'s. The fact was that the virtuous indignation of the print was purely a matter of business. The proprietor took the hint from the banker, who never knew he had given it ; and the 'Westerly Standard' opened fire with a view to fetch the reverend gentleman out of his shell, and as a consequence to advertise and sell the paper. Loving truth above all things, as he interpreted it, and being young, and anything but a man of the world or a Jesuit, Stole weakly walked into the trap which was laid for him and so cleverly baited. "One tenet alone of that apostate Church," he wrote, "was enough, in his opinion, to condemn it in the understanding of all reason-

able men—the infallibility of the pope.” He was careful to spell the last word without a capital. Now the flood-gates were opened, and there was a rush of correspondence which almost swept him away.

When he called on Miss Harman, after this, to apologise for that which he could not help—the introduction, with such extreme bad taste, of her name into the columns of the ‘Standard,’ and also for the purpose of obtaining incidentally her opinion as to the great merit of his reply, which he flattered himself was crushing and conclusive—the result was not at all what he expected.

She read the long epistle through carefully. “I don’t really know the exact meaning of machinations,” she said. “It sounds to me as if it had something to do with dangerous machines. I suppose it is something dreadful.”

“The word is, derivatively, as you surmise, a wrong one to be so used,” explained

the Reverend Septimus, rising, bowing one half of his long body, beaming on her, and excessively anxious to explain the correct use of it; but she took him short.

“Oh, it is not really a point of much moment either way, Mr Stole; but as to the infallibility of popes, it seems, after all, to be about just as reasonable to believe in theirs as to assert one’s own,—which one finds individual Protestants constantly doing,—indeed I often do it.”

He warmly repudiated the idea that he considered himself infallible, fearing that she might misjudge him in this respect. He was nothing more and nothing less than the conventionally weak and erring mortal—so he said.

“I never for a moment intended to hint that you were anything more. I don’t perhaps always express myself clearly; and it is not often easy to explain exactly what one does mean. But there appears to me

to be a certain amount of exclusiveness implied by there being different religions at all, and by the perpetual warfare that goes on about them. None of us can escape."

"There is, or should be, Miss Harman, no exclusiveness in ours; and the Church of England is so wide in its doctrine and large in its sympathies, so altogether cosmopolitan in——"

He was beginning now to be a bore, preaching out of church, so she interrupted him.

"I may be wrong, of course—indeed I daresay I am, for I am not a deep theological student. If you would kindly take up the subject on the first convenient opportunity, I should be so pleased, from the pulpit, I mean,"—deprecatingly, as if she had had enough just then of argument.

He went away soothed and flattered, and promised that, on the following Sunday but one, he would do as she wished.

“Thanks,” she said; “you are so kind.” There was comfort in the pressure of her hand.

The long limp man going out, and noiselessly shutting the door after him, was the arch-enemy whom Pipperly saw with his mind’s eye laying siege to the citadel! It is, we think, pretty evident that there is not really much ground for the worthy old gentleman’s fears.

The Rev. Joseph Tinkler, who had been patiently sitting in the hall, rose to greet his rector with becoming reverence, and the two walked off together. Stole liked Tinkler to see that he was on good terms with Miss Harman, and left word when starting to say where he had gone; Tinkler, on the other hand, liked Stole to see that he maintained his footing also, and could enter, and take the liberty of sitting in the hall, instead of waiting in the streets. They had important business to transact, and went off to transact

it. Lavinia going to the window to lower the blind, could not help smiling as she thought of the difference mentally and physically between the men.

There had been two vacancies in Westerly parish since Tinkler came there. He was the best of creatures ; but he was so much a creature, and nothing more, “poor dear !” that it never entered into the minds of his parishioners to make a move towards having him appointed to the living. It appeared to be so much in the nature of things for him to remain a curate, that, as a natural result, he did remain a curate. He was a white-faced, most worthy individual, really a little over thirty years of age, but looking forty. Short, stout, and soft, with fat papulous cheeks that shuddered as he walked. Though he was to all intents and purposes a young man, still a good deal of the hair was gone from the top of his head, and seemed to have developed into abnormally large whiskers,

and to have taken root in unusual places—giving to his ears, in combination with the cotton-wool which they contained, the appearance of badly made nests constructed by preternatural and slovenly birds.

No one knew where he came from, or where he had been educated, except that Oxford, Cambridge, or Dublin never claimed him; and he was so unassuming that nobody liked to probe too deeply into the depths of that obscure mystery which surrounded his past. He looked after the poor, and said grace most devoutly when he dined. He made neither mischief nor money; and the smallest particle of envy never seemed to have entered his composition.

He most willingly, in duty bound, accepted the Rev. Septimus Stole as sent by Divine Providence to rule over him; whereas the appointment was made through quite another agency—namely, the Bishop's wife. Stole was learned, and had been the Bishop's

private chaplain; and it was known, beyond yes or no, among the Low Churchmen in the diocese "for a dead certainty" (so they said), that the tract entitled 'A Dual Genesis; or the Old Adam and the New' (which, unfortunately, they were all expected to purchase), was the joint production of Mrs Quodlibet and her husband's chaplain.

Providence, therefore, had not really much to do with the appointment of Stole to Westerly; but what did it matter to Tinkler, so long as his faith pulled him through! He had one great strength or weakness—music; and all his spare energy and all his worldly enthusiasm he gave to that. His admiration for Lavinia was based upon his love for it. He had deliberately stated his conviction that her voice was music itself, her throat an instrument, and her conversation a tune or a harmony—I really forget which. His opinion on this one point was

entitled to great weight as being that of an expert and a performer on several instruments, of which he had a most curious collection, including sackbut, dulcimer, psaltery, harp, &c., &c.—quite a museum, in fact; but that on other matters his dicta were not altogether so reliable, goes without saying.

Which of us, I should like to know, has the common-sense to confine our opinions to points upon which we may have a special right to speak, or even the faintest claim to be heard at all?

Don't be too hard on Tinkler. Knowledge, as between man and man, is but comparative, and in the aggregate is neither exhaustive nor complete. The reverend gentleman was no doubt by some supposed to know more than he really did; but he never pretended to be knowledgeable either among his parishioners or his brother clergymen. He was indeed ignorant where many of these said brothers were profound. But

we are too prone to consider mere acquisition to be genius. Though knowledge may be power, yet it does not imply the faculty to use it to advantage, any more than ignorance implies want of sense,—which is a prevailing fallacy also.

It is manifest that there would not be such a striking contrast between men, if we could only feel how little we really do know on any given subject, which we have even profoundly studied; because then it might be presumed that we would not venture beyond our depth, and would be content to inquire or listen, instead of asserting ourselves, so as to appear exceptionally wise and learned. See how this remark applies here.

There was no doubt a great educational difference between the Rev. Septimus Stole and his curate; but it would not have been so apparent if Tinkler had not, in a weak moment, set up as a judge of antiquities out-

side his musical instruments, and jumped at conclusions based on deceptive appearances.

During some repairs to Westerly Church, begun a week after Stole was appointed, something was discovered in a recess in the wall, which the curate described in a letter to an antiquarian publication as "a curious triple ink-bottle, possibly designed to hold inks of three colours—black, blue, and red," and was on the point of sending off the letter to post, when Stole appeared, only just in time to save him from what in his (Stole's) opinion would have been indelible disgrace.

The thing was in fact a splendid, all but uniquely perfect, chrismatory! Imagine that! The rector took, of course, possession of it, —sorrowing in his soul at the thought that the Church of England no longer permitted its use.

Was he a *very* much more sensible man, for all his knowledge, than his curate? I

can't really determine that point. I only know that I believe, acquisitively speaking, there is a great difference between Oxford and, say, St Bumbles. I have been told so by Bishop Quodlibet, who has had a good deal of experience of clergymen of all kinds, and from all sorts of places, and seats of learning.

And now, see again how, still further, I personally illustrate my profound remark as to knowledge being merely relative. I take it for granted that you are better informed than the Rev. Joseph Tinkler; and that, consequently, you know all about chrismatories. Well, a word in your ear. I may tell you, in strict confidence, that although I permitted Stole to believe directly the reverse when he told me the story, yet I took an early opportunity of calling at a second-hand theological book-shop (where I am known) for the purpose of taking down and consulting a dictionary of ecclesiastical

terms. You see I would not for worlds have it supposed that I didn't know everything, and wasn't quite a peg above Tinkler. You see also that I am a bit of a humbug—I speak to you in confidence, dear reader—and you will despise me accordingly; but mind you don't say anything about it,—that makes all the difference. There is a great feeling of satisfaction in “making a clean breast of it,” if one knows that one's confidence will be respected.

Let me say that there was no cleaner-breasted or more single-hearted a man than poor Tinkler, of that I am morally certain (though he made this dreadful blunder about the chrismatory), within the large diocese over which Dr Quodlibet presided with that impartial dignity which is proverbially associated with the Episcopal function. He had been most highly recommended to the Bishop by a colonial brother, and was instantly admitted, with no other credentials (as why

should he not?) to the proud privilege of serving under Dr Quodlibet—a great compliment and honour both to the recommender and the recommendee.

Westerly parish—a very big one—got to pity and to love Tinkler without exactly being able to define a reason, or even asking itself why it did either; it was simply within the limit of the fitness of things. But the idea of individual members combining for the purpose of bringing influence to bear for his promotion was altogether outside that limit, and never seemed to occur to any one. On the contrary, Westerly from time immemorial had had for its rector a man of family, of social position, of whom it could be said that he was the son of So-and-so, or that his aunt was Lady Thingamy, or his first cousin married Lord What's-his-name's sister. A great deal more than this could be said for the Rev. Septimus Stole, including the fact that his father, the

Rev. Decimus Stole, D.D., had married a foreign governess, who was set down in 'Burke' as "of noble German extraction." Indeed all you had to do was to turn to the Peerage, and "there you were" at once, and "no bother at all about it," as Mrs Fungus tersely remarked.

And Mrs Fungus knew what she was saying, because she was herself of the Upper Ten—at least her grandmother, the Honourable Miss Lapsus, was, who ran away with one of her father's footmen on a night of a family ball, and was duly married (and disowned) afterwards.

I may mention, though it really does not concern us much one way or other, that the Rev. Canon Fungus was very proud of this honourable connection (with a big H), and gave himself great credit for it. He knew nothing about the footman, or pretended he knew nothing; anyhow, being a clergyman of long service and social status in the

diocese, it was natural that he should, in conjunction with his wife, stand up for gentlemen rectors. Why not? It is, as she rightly observed, so awkward for ladies to have "a mere nobody" in such a conspicuous position. Ten to one, too, but he goes and makes matters utterly hopeless by getting married to a she-nobody. A vulgar man is bad enough; but a vulgar wife! I shrug my shoulders too, and agree with Mrs Fungus.

I don't say Tinkler was vulgar, but he was a nobody beyond doubt. As a poor curate he was without enemies; as rector he would have had few friends. He seemed quite happy and contented with his lot, as became a Christian minister. There were plenty of musical families whose doors were always open to him, and which made life enjoyable. The poor looked upon him as one of themselves; and the "woman of the house" didn't therefore feel it necessary when

he called, to at once put down her knitting or sewing, and to stand up; she simply “made a long arm or a long leg,” and with it drew a chair over to the other side of the fireplace for him to sit on, and then went on with her work, even to the nourishing of her last offspring in the way that nature ordained, but which has been refined away (as being old-fashioned and troublesome) in favour of quite another mode by polite society, which nowadays brings up its young by the aid of a donkey, a cow, a goat, or a — But that’s neither here nor there, and we only wander. Little Jack or Tommy, as likely as not, would find his way in between Tinkler’s knees, while the reverend gentleman talked to his mamma; or little Meg or Molly would contend for forcible possession of his lap, which, in order to settle their differences, he would divide between them. It went to his heart always to say “No.” Even the daughter of

the Horse-leech, of proverbial memory, would not have exhausted his good nature till she had left him nothing to bestow. On the very first day of his taking up duty in Westerly, little Meg, while contemplating the glories of his big silver watch and steel chain, had made a secret compact with him that he was to hear her her "Collick always first" at Sunday-school, after shutting up of books; for she was of short memory, and knew the consequences if obliged to wait, in order of size, till her turn came to "say" it. Being utterly free from guile, he did not see through the youthful Meg; and set her anxiety down to quite another and more worthy motive no doubt.

Dogs liked him quite as much as children did; and many of them made a point of doing escort-duty in the lanes and back streets,—passing him on, as it were, to one another, as he went from house to house. Or, if they were out when he called, and

came in during his visit, they made him welcome by running their cold noses into his fist; giving him a start which involved recognition, and was a canine "How-do-you-do?"

People say—indeed it is a prevailing belief—that whom children and dogs love must be lovable. I don't go so far as that. I think it merely an indication that the person so singled out possesses the leading attributes of the child and of the dog—which are instinctively discoverable by children and dogs as a matter of course. Be this as it may, Tinkler was a good creature—an honest soul: such familiar phrases fitted him exactly. The elder married women ever spoke of him among themselves as "poor dear" when discussing his points over their tea and toast.

He seemed to have no relatives except a sister, who came to spend a week with him once, and disappeared again. People were puzzled about her. She was "nice," she was

young, she was good-looking, graceful, well-bred—"astonishingly well-bred," Mrs Fungus said—self-possessed, quite a contrast to Tinkler. What was she? Somebody's "companion," an upper servant, a lady-help, a governess, a shop-girl? No one knew; and out of a sort of delicate regard for Tinkler, no one asked—fearing that he would rather not tell, and knowing that he would speak the truth.

This was the greatest possible proof of the regard in which he was held. Think of what it meant! It meant the absolute abstention, on the part of the women, from aggressive curiosity and scandal-mongering; it meant a mystery in the midst of them (which has always been a luxurious piece of common property in enjoyment among parishioners) left unprobed and unsolved. She was simply a pupil-teacher in a large school, educating herself, while she earned her keep by educating others.

Her arrival at Westerly had, however, very nearly caused a social upheaval, the consequences of which might have been disastrous to poor Tinkler's prospects, had not her departure as quickly calmed the excitement in the household of the Rev. Canon Fungus. Young Joel Fungus had made her acquaintance, and improved upon it, in the railway carriage, on his way back from Harrow. Seeing her name on a bonnet-box, he ventured to introduce himself as the son of a clergyman in Westerly, and a friend of her brother Joseph. Subsequently he became so attentive to her as to alarm his mother.

"Tinkler is such a fool," she said to her husband, "that there is no use in speaking to him."

"Quite so," said the Canon; "and Joel is such a fool too, that it would be worse than useless to speak to him."

"One doesn't know what on earth she is, or where she comes from," said Mrs Fungus.

“Nor where Joel will go to, for the matter of that,” said the Canon.

If the innocent cause of all this danger to the house and lineage of the race of Fungus had not left Westerly, there might have been a vigorous effort to probe the mystery. That a mystery existed there was no doubt, only people were not curious about it. We are perhaps able to clear it up; but what we know it is only right that we should tell to our readers in our own good time and in our own way.

If Mrs Fungus had been only aware that the Scottowes were mixed up with it, she would have been very much surprised indeed; but after all, if the Honourable Mary Lapsus could bring herself to run off with a footman, why shouldn't a Scottowe, or any other commoner, go over the line and break away also? Human nature is only human nature. Enthusiastic persons will try to make out that it ought to be something else,

but it isn't; and that's all the logical excuse there need be made for it.

The Scottowes having become long since extinct, people didn't bother themselves much abusing or making excuses for them. When they died out, scandal ceased to have a point, and gossip gave them up. Nevertheless, being on the subject, I may as well take the reader into confidence touching this remarkable family.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCOTTOWES.

“We are as ancient a family as any in Europe ; but let that go : antiquity is not respected now.”—BEN JONSON.

THE Scottowes, as a race, somehow had the knack of being always interesting : even when naughty they were nice. I have said that they are extinct—by which I do not mean to assert that no one bearing the name is to be found in the land of the living. Possibly there may be many Scottowes in existence. Not only the London Directory but provincial ones may, on search, disclose the fact ; but notwithstanding this, I stoutly maintain the apparent contradiction or paradox, and still say that the Scottowes are

extinct. There are Scottowes and Scottowes ; but THE Scottowes “are not.”

I may add that I am sorry for it ; but the fact, much as it may be regretted by the enthusiast in genealogy and heraldry, leaves me free to go fully into personalities, upon which otherwise, as a matter of taste and etiquette, I should have hesitated to dwell or to disclose to my readers.

I say I am sorry, because I believe that all right-minded persons must feel a certain amount of regret at the cessation of a grand old family, which has weathered the social and political storms and changes of centuries ; which has borne its part, and held its own even against long odds in the battle of life ; and which in each generation has produced at least one prominent character, raised, either by virtues or by vices, a head and shoulders above the common herd and the dead level of fashion or propriety—a leading statesman, a victorious soldier, a

profound scholar, a pungent wit, an eloquent divine, a spendthrift, a dandy, a Court beauty — somebody who furnished table-talk for the million, and gossip for the few. Court beauties, it must be owned, were more plentiful among them than discreet; but what mattered? They were notoriously an eccentric race—a circle with very irregular spokes; and that quality which in the Scottowe soldier was called dash, among the ladies of the house trenched somewhat, if it did not actually touch, on those qualities which win equivocal renown at Courts. But as far as my judgment goes, it has always appeared to me that Courts are more to blame than beauties. The fault lies more with the candle than the moth, though the moth suffers; and I feel quite certain that—without being, I hope, very much worse than my neighbours — had I been subject to the Scottowe temptations, I should have “fallen away” many times, or

else consumed myself—becoming thus, by a very mixed metaphor, both moth and candle.

The beauty of its women was proverbial, their witchery equally so. The mere platter-faced nonentity, who only looked pretty, was not of them. They had life, fire, soul—devil or deity—but always something in them. The power of its males to captivate and win the opposite sex was also a family trait, most marked and recurrent in the genealogical record—and this irrespective of personal attractions. The portraits on the walls bore ample testimony to the fact that, time after time, an ugly Scottowe had secured a lovely partner—and a rich one.

But enough ! There is neither space nor time for us to enter into, and linger over, the history of every individual member of this interesting race. We must content ourselves with going back a century or so.

When plain, very plain, John Scottowe, a

cornet of dragoons who had not won his spurs as yet, and was not even in the running for the family baronetcy, gained the hand of Lady Kitty Beecher, the reigning beauty and heiress of the time, people wondered "how the deuce it was done," or what she saw in him. He was merely the second son of a country rector, and his uncle had two sons living; so that all these, besides his own father and brother, stood between him and the title. But what mattered all these drawbacks? Lady Kitty had a will of her own, and she exercised it. She was independent in more senses than one—in fact, in every sense, and pleased herself. She was known in society and at Court as the Pocket Venus; but whether in allusion to her wealth and beauty combined, or to her beauty and smallness of stature, it is now impossible and not of very great moment to discover. I question whether Jack himself took the trouble to investigate

the point. He married, went off to the wars, and returned famous ; having also obtained rapid promotion for dogged bravery in the field. He simply didn't know what it was to be afraid, and kept "pegging away" when others calculated chances and went in for precaution. How much truth is there in the assertion, *Fortuna nimium quem favet stultum facit*? None ; but I would gladly take the risk, in order to secure her patronage. If a thirst for speculation leads us to investigate this point—with Jack for a text—I'm afraid it will involve of necessity a digression into the question of how far the "survival of the fittest" applies also. Suffice it to say that, through a series of disasters and accidents, he in his old age succeeded to the estates and title, and died, leaving two sons and a daughter by Lady Kitty. He was known as General John.

The daughter, to his great grief,—for he was a staunch Protestant,—became a pervert

to Rome. His elder son and successor, Sir Hugh, was famous for harebrained hunting exploits and hospitality, and did his duty as a country gentleman with credit to himself and satisfaction to everybody ; while the other went into the Church, and became, as a matter of course, rector of Scottowecum - Marshley, the family living, and a canon, and was fairly on the way to a mitre when, as we said, his father died—having outlived, by many years, the Pocket Venus. At his death Court influence ceased, and the mitre faded in the dim distance.

The old soldier on his deathbed exhorted his two sons to marry, for the sake of the race. His wishes were religiously attended to by both ; but the result was not satisfactory from the dead man's point of view, and the legitimate line terminated in an heiress. The Canon was childless, and his brother, Sir Hugh, had only one daughter, Mabel.

She had the leading characteristics of her family. She was extremely interesting. She was handsome, self-willed, strong and active, both in body and mind, bright, clever, and hard to control or manage. She must have got all these qualities, too, from the male side; she inherited none of them from her mother. It seemed, indeed, as if nature had made a slip somehow—had been taken un-awares,—and that she should have been a male, with all the manly Scottowe qualities concentrated in herself—the last of them; yet she had all the captivating charms of her own sex. She was idolised by Sir Hugh, and spoiled as a matter of course.

The Canon, as in duty bound, was wont to lecture his brother on her bringing-up and her surroundings; which was all taken in good part by the Baronet, who kept on never minding.

“It’s not my fault, George, but yours,” was his retort, “if she knew how to ride to

the hounds before she could say her Catechism or the Thirty-nine Articles. She's young, and—well—there she is—don't you know. I don't interfere with the parson's part of the business. I never did. I know nothing about it."

"But, my dear boy, you do interfere."

"But I say, I don't. I prefer to stick to my last."

"Ah, but I say again that you do! You fill the girl's mind with horses, and dogs, and shooting, and what not."

"Nonsense, George!" retorted Hugh; "why, she is only a child. She is too young to have a mind. It is all animal spirits at sixteen."

"No matter what it is. Just now I am most anxious to prepare her for confirmation. The bishop is to begin his tour next month; and I expect him here about the third Sunday in March."

"All right. Mabel is here, and you are

not far off. Take her over to the glebe week about, if you like. I cannot spare her for longer than a week at a time; and I fancy that seven days at a stretch will be enough for you and her aunt Julia—if it ain't, I'm a Dutchman."

"Very well. Agreed!" said the Canon; and so it was settled.

"And I say, look here, George! Fair play! You may as well give up lecturing me after you have had these long innings: you'll have a fair field and no favour. By the bye, of course, when the old bishop comes, I'll put him up and entertain him as a matter of course, and also as many parsons as can be fitted round my mahogany. It will be quite a treat, and a sort of mild spiritual dissipation for my wife to have him."

"That's really very kind."

"Pish! no compliments, George, between brothers. You can't very well afford, out of

your limited income, to be preyed upon by a lot of hungry clergy for whom you don't care, and can't be expected to care, a damn."

The Reverend George gave a sudden start, winced a little, and looked pained at the sound of the expletive.

"Oh! I beg your pardon—I really do; it—it—quite escaped me."

"So it appears," said George, half in sorrow and half in anger.

"Well, never mind; you know what I mean. It does not matter, so long as the heart is in the right place, old chap. I'll give them plenty to eat and lots of good liquor—all for your sake, and not out of regard for them, I can assure you. No humbug about me." They shook hands warmly. "Stop and have a bit of lunch. Here's Mabel! I hear her in the hall. I say, you'll report to me how she gets on?"

"Yes, of course."

“But you mustn’t make her mope: the mother does enough of that—between ourselves; and a spiritual wet blanket ain’t comfortable, I know from experience. If I see any signs of——”

Here the door opened and the last of the race, radiant in her youth, health, and beauty, stood in the opening. Her first action was to kiss her uncle George with a will, and with a distinctly audible smack.

“Don’t hurt him, my dear,” said Sir Hugh. “I’m jealous!”

“Oh, you silly! I’ve kissed you ever so many times to-day.” Here she repeated the operation; “as for hurting uncle George, I wouldn’t for worlds.”

“You’re going to spend a week with him at the rectory, to do penance and fasting.”

“Am I?” with her hands brought down to her sides, and a quick expectant look from father to uncle, and then back from uncle to father; “really! How nice! You’ll let

me play the organ, won't you, in the church? I love that grand old thing so much."

"You shall. We expect the new organist this very day."

"You'll make him give me a lesson or two, won't you? I am glad that cross old man Musdoc isn't to be there any more. He couldn't bear any one to go near it."

And thus they chattered and got through the morning, Lady Scottowe not putting in an appearance, as usual, till mid-day. She was one of those fragile delicate creatures who seem somehow to be always very much in their own way when they get up too soon.

The Canon was extremely fond of his niece, in spite of her many grave faults, which he hoped to correct; and he carried her off that day with great rejoicing.

It must be owned that she tried him sorely during the alternate weeks she spent with him for the benefit of his special instructions. He was never altogether sure

that she did not sometimes secretly laugh at him. She was very quiet and well-behaved indeed at the classes which he held twice a-week in the church. She was generally there before him, and he frequently left her behind practising on the organ. She was passionately fond of music, and no one at home cared for it. The church was close to the rectory, and there was no restraint upon her. The moment she heard the first peal of the instrument she was off to it; and the new organist seemed to make it talk and feel emotion just as she did. The Canon hoped that in other respects she was making rapid progress, and that his expositions generally would bear fruit; but after devoting much care and energy to the elucidation of the question of regeneration, it was rather disheartening to be told that she didn't see the urgent necessity for being born again in the case of a person of such exceptionally good birth as herself!

He forgot, in his consternation, how that very morning, at breakfast, he had descanted most eloquently on the fact that the Scottowe blood was second to none. But if he was a man possessed of family pride, he had also a proper sense of the proprieties. He told the story with some reluctance to her father, feeling bound, as he had promised, to report progress. Sir Hugh, being untrammelled by the social and moral exigencies which necessarily environ a parson, and having a keen sense of humour, made no secret of his enjoyment; but these same social exigencies impelled his brother to reprove him with severity, and to caution him for the hundredth time against the danger of encouraging Mabel's tendency to self-esteem.

"Oh, tut!" said the Baronet. "Why, man, you've got a good opinion of yourself—so have I—so has everybody;" and he only laughed the louder. "She's a Scottowe

out and out. As sharp as a needle, and as hard as nails."

"No doubt," said the Reverend George, in a dubiously neutral tone of voice, which might have meant praise or blame. "All the same, I seriously beg of you not to repeat the anecdote to the bishop."

"Oh no! of course not. Now you are coming to common-sense. I'll be discreet. Hinder promotion, of course, and all that sort of thing, if I let the cat out of the bag! But after all, old boy, with an Evangelical mother, the girl can't be turned all at once into a—a—what-you-may-call-it—Ritualist." The Canon coughed, and blew his nose like a trumpet, so that the last words were hardly audible. "It was devilish good, though, wasn't it, George?" and he laughed again consumedly. "Devilish good, for the first week."

He'd have gone on exploding, only for the effect which the slow and solemn entrance

of Lady Scottowe had upon him and his brother. Her civility to the Canon always embarrassed the latter, because he knew she hated him ; and Sir Hugh was only too glad to leave them together. A warning finger was raised by the Canon, which was responded to with a wink—as much as to say, “Mum !”

But notwithstanding promises and protestations, the story was all over the parish in no time ; the Baronet having let it out after dinner to some kindred spirits. By some channel or other it reached the ears of his wife, from whom he got a severe curtain-lecture. She was a weak woman, with the most pronounced religious opinions ; and these women always rule, because the easy-going male prefers to be let alone, and yields for peace’ sake. Sir Hugh married her for her money and her pedigree : he got both, and nobody pitied him. She was the daughter of a philanthropic nobleman ; and

was the kind of woman who, if her surroundings had been Roman Catholic, would have been a nun, and a devout believer in the Holy Father. Her surroundings were of an exactly opposite sort, so she made a pope of her own father, and believed in his infallibility. When he died from pleurisy, contracted at a costermongers' tea-meeting, she endeavoured to improve the occasion for Mabel's benefit, who had in her mind a confused idea as to the connection of pleurisy with pluralists, and believed that it was a parson's ailment. This confusion was rendered more confounded in the child's mind by the fact that her grandfather used to preach, though he wasn't a clergyman.

If my lady was utterly out of sympathy with her husband, she was equally so with the daughter. She never could be got to see that this was her own fault; and always said, with a sigh, that anything she heard

about either of them "had long since ceased to surprise her." Assiduous and ostentatious reading of religious books seemed to be the end and aim of her silently reproachful existence.

She did not believe in the influence for good which the uncle hoped to exercise over her wayward and self-willed daughter, and doubted his ability to succeed where some half-dozen governesses had signally failed. One of these long-suffering females had summed up the situation in a phrase, which the mother never lost an opportunity of bringing back to the recollection of father and daughter, "She has a taste for everything wild—set to music."

But neither father, mother, nor uncle had any idea of the extent to which Mabel Scottowe's erratic tendencies would lead her. She rebelled at once and utterly against the ritualistic teaching which prevailed at the rectory. The spirit of her departed grand-

father, by the mother's side, rose in revolt against it.

Then, again, she fell out with her aunt Julia, because she objected to the smell of the school children in class; whereupon the aunt retorted that, in her opinion, there was more of the odour of sanctity about it than was to be found in stables and kennels. This drew forth a rejoinder that "it might be so; and if so," Mabel said that "she simply preferred the dogs and horses." Aunt Julia perceiving that she could make nothing of the girl, and uncle George fearing that she was far too clever for him to grapple with, she was brought back by mutual consent at the end of the third week, and handed over as being "quite unfit for confirmation—at least," he said, "for some time to come."

The time never came.

Sir Hugh was delighted to have her back, and to find that she was "one too many"

for George. He was never tired of cracking his jokes at his brother's expense. And he thought, as she stood at the breakfast-room window next morning, in the crisp fresh air, with the early sun streaming in upon her, while she threw out scraps of bread and toast, and everything she could lay her hands on, to the scrambling pack of beagles outside, who had been liberated at her request, that there wasn't such a creature in the three kingdoms.

After this she kept up her visits to the rectory, or, rather, to the old church—both were only a good smart walk for a strong healthy girl; and gradually her love of music seemed to draw her away more and more from the infatuated and purblind father. At last he began to grow jealous of the grand organ; and one evening, when Mabel did not appear, he spoke his mind more freely than was his wont at the dinner-table—for truly he did not half enjoy the

meal without her. The housemaid came down from her room with the intelligence that she had taken a hand-bag with her containing the usual necessities for a night out, and it was concluded that she had gone to stay with uncle George ; there was, therefore, no alarm. Next day, when she failed to appear at luncheon, a groom was sent over to the rectory. He came back with the news that she had not been there, either that day or the day before. There was consternation. The father all but went out of his mind ; the mother saw in it the hand of God, and nerved herself to bear it as a "chastening judgment," with a calm, cold, reproachful placitude which drove him frantic.

The blow was indeed a crushing one for the house of Scottowe. Its sun went down in murkiness and cloud, instead of full red splendour. She had simply run away with the new organist, about whom nothing

definite was known then, beyond his good looks and insinuating manner. Subsequent investigation disclosed the fact that he was an utter scamp—an adventurer from the sister island, who had borne testimony to his own good qualities in sundry documents, to which he had affixed signatures without authority.

It was all very sad this, but by no means unprecedented; and it happened so long before our story opened that it was all but forgotten, and ceased to be interesting except to a few scandal-mongering old moles who still survived. All the persons mainly concerned were dead. Sir Hugh would never speak to or see his brother again—laying, rather hardly, all the blame on him. He scarcely lifted his head. His heart was broken, and in a few months he died. The Canon followed him in three years or so. The last survivor was Lady Scottowe, who lived—a wasp without her

sting—to a fair old age. No tidings of the fugitives ever reached her in her retirement in London, and she never sought any; but a faint belief existed in the neighbourhood that Mabel had died in abject want and suffering somewhere in the colonies, where she had been deserted by the fellow who was the cause of her misfortune. When a report of this sort gains circulation, there is generally some foundation for it. It comes in letters home from emigrants, who have belonged to or have friends in a locality.

That the Canon was to blame for want of common-sense and common caution cannot be doubted; but that he should have been saddled with the whole weight of the misfortune was not just. However, with that we have nothing to do.

I have said that the legitimate line terminated in an heiress—this unfortunate Mabel; so it did. But General Sir John Scottowe had a nephew—the son of his

elder brother by a nameless mother—who had served as a common soldier under him, and would have been advanced, despite the bar-sinister, if he had had any one good quality besides bravery. Unfortunately he hadn't. He married and left a son, whose descendant the next generation would about bring down to the time at which our veracious tale begins, and about whom we may have something to say by-and-by.

To go back to old times again for a moment. The manor of Scottowe became the subject of prolonged litigation, for reasons which nobody but an ecclesiastical lawyer could explain, and which only an ecclesiastical lawyer could understand or find interesting. At last, after a generation had almost gone, it was, "by order of the Courts," advertised for sale, but the rectory did not go with it. The appointment of an incumbent had long since lapsed, and had, in consequence, reverted to the late bishop, who, in due

course, appointed more than one. Dr Quodlibet, the present bishop, was now in a fair way to having a vacancy at his disposal, the present incumbent being old and feeble—a cantankerous curmudgeon (very unlike the Canon, of whose worth traditions lingered still), with a fad for greenhouse cultivation and nothing else. He would spend large sums on rare plants, but was a miser in all else. He paid his gardener more than his curate. When the prelate to whom he owed his appointment came to see him, and took a fancy to a very rare shrub, he had actually to beg for a root of it—an unprecedented thing in the history of bishop and parson, I should suppose. The old churl could not refuse; but he suffered tortures till he learned from the astute old gardener that the root had been baked on top of the stove, quite sufficiently long to secure its premature death, before being packed up for his lordship.

But I have wandered off the track again to prose about an old man with one foot in the grave, and who has really nothing to do with our narrative, beyond making way very soon perhaps for a person who has.

And here (as I am likely to transgress again and yet again) it is just as well that I enter my protest against the prevailing custom of making apology for digression; for I hold with Swift that if we are to be driven to making books, with the fatal confinement of delivering nothing beyond what is to the purpose, "supercilious censors would find the society of writers quickly reduced." And what a calamity that would be! You must therefore be patient with me, and allow me to unbend, and aimlessly wander, or even maunder, now and then, dear reader.

I remember a most delightful chapter in Montaigne, "On the likeness of children to

their parents," in which, I assure you most positively, there is not a single sentence bearing on the subject. I cannot of course hope to be as entertaining as he is; but I may surely cite him as a very good precedent; and I can safely promise never to be anything like so wide of the mark in any of my digressions. But I can't help digressing. I am as prone to it as a youth is to whistling.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIDNIGHT.

“Oh, my upswelling heart!
 It is a pain too doughty to be borne,
 Without a flood of tears and heart with sighs y-torn.”
 —CHATTERTON.

“It is most extraordinary!” said Dr Collyrium to himself as he opened his door with a latch-key and let himself in, — “most extraordinary, the queer things that Miss Harman can do, and people not mind.”

But, stay! There is no reason that, because I lagged a full generation behind in my last chapter, I should now anticipate by many more. The doctor must go to bed while we return to the ball-room.

Under cover of the darkness we cross the

main street of Westerly, and, turning down a narrow lane at right angles to it, when we reach the end, turn again into a still narrower one—a short cut, leading by the river-side among the docks, wharfs, and quays. The place is full of murky life and bustle, preparing for the dawn; in fact, Westerly has been making a night of it, previous to the sundering of many ties and breaking of many links, and hasn't been to bed at all. Tommy Atkins at his best and worst is to be met everywhere about; now holding, in some secluded archway, short, sad, and final converse with the girl he is to leave behind him, and whom her mistress supposes to be in her bed, but whom he is to marry when he returns—little heeding that perhaps their fate may be never to meet again, and that before many weeks the manly heart of Tommy may cease to beat. Claspings her to his breast now, he shrinks back further into the shade—being shamefaced—as a

band of noisy and dissolute acquaintances pass by in riotous association.

Further on we meet in most fraternal embrace a soldier and civilian, vowing a mutually inebriate assurance of eternal friendship, which has suffered a rude shock and widened into a breach even before we have time to pass, and will doubtless terminate in open enmity and blows, to be all again forgotten when sobriety and headaches follow with the sunrise. Passing on quickly, we come suddenly upon another soldier—a sober one, a fine, handsome, well-made fellow, a fact to be seen easily enough even by the dim light.

He would have missed the house he was in search of, were it not that a man of the quay-porter class stopped just at the moment and struck a match against the door-jamb. A momentary flicker showed the number on the door, revealing at the same time and throwing into broad relief, with

Dutch picture-like effect, a black and dirt-begrimed visage, and hands and tattered garments to correspond—all telling unmistakably of drink and poverty.

One of the unsolved problems of life is how poverty contrives to get drunk; but the fact remains, like many other facts about which we are equally puzzled.

The soldier turned the handle, and the sudden opening of the door resulted in a mishap,—the coalheaver's pipe got smashed, and the light was put out by the intruding draught. A volley of oaths and curses followed the double catastrophe, which was as suddenly checked by pressure from the iron grasp of the soldier's hand upon the blasphemer's throat.

“Cease your confounded row,” he said, “or I'll soon give you a more substantial grievance to swear about than a broken pipe. Make yourself scarce!” The man looked at him with a scowl. “Here's my own

pipe and tobacco." And the soldier made most ample restitution by substituting a handsome brier-root for the more humble clay (which had been ground to powder under his heel), as he entered and shut the door behind him.

The contrast between the two pipes was not greater than that between the owners. But life is made up of these contrasts. They are to the mental vision—if we may use such a loose expression—what light and shade are in nature. Without them we should miss the picturesqueness of variety which we meet with in the study of character.

We see great truths, says the poet, as night shows out the stars—by contrast. The prince and the pauper rub skirts in crowded thoroughfares. And the honest man may, if he only keeps up appearances (everything depends on that), sometimes sit at meat with the scornful. The blaze of

prosperity oftentimes lights up the gorgeous habitation of the one with oriental splendour; while the halfpenny dip of poverty only serves to make darkness visible in the abode of the other—by contrast.

Wealth looks askance at want, and will even step off the footway to avoid it; nevertheless poor Codrus thanks the gods for those old garments which Sempronius casts aside. If Dives, with Mrs Dives by his side, comes unexpectedly upon Codrus in his semi-nude condition, Dives—who is looked upon by his wife as a philosopher—comforts her by the observation that, “after all, these divergent states of society are not so violently opposed as at first sight they might appear, but, on the contrary, are quite reconcilable, my dear. I go with my face bare, and I don’t mind it in the least; so does Codrus, but, being ragged, most of him has become face. It is simply, after all, a question of contrasts.”

Simple folk there are, who, no doubt, console themselves with the conviction that things will be set right in another world, where contrasts are presumably unknown. Others again there are, who, if they may not drink from goblets of the precious metals, content themselves with the assurance of the satirist, *Nulla aconita bibuntur fictilibus*—there is no poison in common crockery; but their number is limited; and we of the majority are not happy, and are perpetually working at the nodosities which we can neither unravel nor explain: all hiding poverty as well as we can, and every one striving to rise and to shine—by contrast—to greater advantage in the social firmament than our neighbours.

Yet with all this, when the grim visitor, who calls on each of us but once, arrives—even then the man whose career has been one long struggle to keep body and soul together, will rather part with his last guinea

to the doctor of medicine who keeps him alive, than to the doctor of divinity who only helps him to die. Strangest of all contrasts this.

But I trench on dangerous ground. My mission is not to preach; and indeed I might have told the reader to skip the few previous paragraphs; but it never occurred to me to do so till this moment. It is now too late.

The soldier hurried along the passage, and opening the door to the right with as much certainty as though he had been there before, was met in tearful embrace by a girl, who instantly drew back with a mingled expression of shame and fear.

“Kate, darling!” he said, “you should not have given me such minute instructions if you did not wish me here.” He assumed an unreal tone of reproach; but the voice was enough for her—it brought her back at once into his arms.

“Oh, Hugh, Hugh!” she faltered, “the—
the uniform. Good heavens! what have
you done?”

“Done, sweet! Escaped! Cheer up.
You must not be down-hearted. To-morrow
will see me a free man, I hope—out of the
toils.”

“And me?” She clasped her hands in
agony, standing momentarily away from
him, with blank despair depicted on her
lovely countenance. There was a far-away
look in her tearful eyes which troubled him.

“You do not doubt me, Kate?”

“Doubt! Oh no—no—no! I do not
doubt you, but I tremble at the thought
of dangers that may be in store for you
and for me; and how—oh, how shall I
bear anything without you? I shall die!”

“Be brave, my girl,” he said, drawing
her to him. “You will have a home and
kindly sympathy in Westerly when you
explain all. Your brother——”

“My brother is not you, my darling! My God!” she exclaimed in accents of suppressed agony, “you will never come back, Hugh! You will be killed if once I let you go!” And her hands now clasped him, despairing, as with head thrown back she looked appealingly into his face.

“Kate,” he said, in a tone which carried conviction with it—it was so sad and solemn—“I must!”

“Oh no, no! Let the worst come to the worst. You are not guilty. Why should you fly? Face it all, Hugh—face the worst. Fling off that dreadful uniform. For my sake, stay—oh stay, my own!”

“For your sake, darling, more than for my own, I must not stay. I am not guilty,—that’s at least no small consolation to a man with a conscience, and a wife who has faith in him; but I have foolishly kept up the companionship of those who are guilty. There is only my simple word

against the oaths of a clique of sharpers who have made me an innocent tool. And if they agree to perjure themselves, who is to believe me? Cheques were forged and the money was got, and—part of it was traced to me!”

“But you didn’t know then—you never knew——”

“What matter? I was in the toils—a dupe, a contemptible dupe. I enter now on a new life. I shall come back to you with a name and a reputation, as many men have done before, and will do again, from more dangerous expeditions than this is likely to be. Things can then be explained, of which no explanation would be accepted now. The hand of Providence seems to have been held out to me at last. I have had marvellous escapes since we parted; and events have been crowded into three short days which should have taken months. Only for this uniform, which

shocked you so, I would have been in the grasp of less friendly arms than yours. The poor fellow who made the exchange with me rejoiced, and so did I—so opportune did we consider the meeting. Of the two men, I am the safer off, I think;—he is sure to be hunted down. But I have ever so much to say to you, my darling wife, and time is so short. Don't break down now, with vain regrets and tears—you have been so brave and have fought such a good fight heretofore. Come over here and sit by me." And saying "come," he carried her instead.

There are moments when even the storyteller should cease to intrude, and should draw the curtain between himself and those he introduces to the public. This is surely such a one.

CHAPTER IX.

ARGUMENTATIVE AND LITERARY.

“Faith we began upon all sorts of talk.”

—BROWNING.

HAVING already delayed too long, we hurry past the door, re-enter the street, and as we do so meet two suspicious-looking men in close converse with our recent acquaintance the quay porter—all three now evidently on the watch, and determining on some concerted action which can hardly be of a reputable kind. We cross over to the other side—not liking the look of them—as a matter of precaution which naturally and quite involuntarily suggests itself, and find ourselves soon within ear-shot of the

music, and in the full glow of the many-lighted windows which have quite put out the less obtrusive stars.

These windows are all recessed inside, forming charming mullioned and transomed bays, in which are seats formed in the window-sills—a most convenient arrangement, much to be commended in a ball-room; because those guests who are not dancing need not be in the way of those who are; and besides all this, the “wall-flower” may find a spot in which to take root, and pleasant nooks and corners, admirably adapted to love-making, are provided. The architect who planned the building evidently knew what he was about, and felt, perhaps from particular experience, that small bays as well as large were necessary to the perfection of his work; he devised them accordingly—angular ones, which just held two persons comfortably, or three uncomfortably, as the third could

only find room in the corner; so that maiden aunts or stern mothers generally preferred a bay to themselves—when they could get it—within sight but out of ear-shot.

The major and Lavinia occupied one of these smaller “flirting boxes,” as they were called, long enough to attract notice. Their conversation was prolonged, animated, and absorbingly interesting; so much so, that Georgie Collyrium and many other ladies in the room, with that natural instinct peculiar to the sex, had come to a pretty unanimous conclusion as to the subject which was being discussed between them, though they were rather puzzled—from the absence of certain signs and indications usually observable under similar circumstances—as to what the upshot would be. Even that most unobservant of males, Captain Tiptop, couldn’t help remarking that there was something up.

"Of course there is," said Fitz. "Didn't I tell you so, and you only laughed at me? I'd have laid fifty to one on the red head three weeks ago."

"I thought it was only your usual chaff, dontch-you-know," replied Tiptop, in the languid tone of the British officer when he has had enough dancing, enough supper, and enough wine.

"I never chaff on so serious a subject," said Fitz, solemnly, winding up with an imitative "dontch-you-know."

There was an awkward pause, as if the depth or solemnity of the subject was momentarily too much for the captain. "I'm deuced sorry," at last he said.

Fitz stroked his own moustache. "Well, hang me if that isn't too good! Why, one would think, to look at you, that you expected Tynte was going to be—hanged."

But Tiptop felt the gravity of the situation too keenly to trifle with it. Besides

all that, wine always made him solemn when it didn't make him drunk.

"You had better go into mourning at once," went on Fitz; but still the captain did not rally.

"Look here, Fitz," he said; "you are simply a big idiot, or you wouldn't go on so—without any regard to the magnitude of the interests involved, or—of——"

"The amount of liquid which can be taken without getting into a fellow's head. That's about it."

"No, it isn't," retorted Tiptop, becoming suddenly more argumentative—much to the delight of his friend.

"Well," said Fitz, "you may start fair again, at all events. Where were you? 'The magnitude of the interests involved——'"

"Yes; or the issue——"

"Oh, come! It's rather premature to discuss that point, isn't it?"

“I suppose you think I don’t know what I’m talking about,” said Tiptop, turning from him with dignity. “I say, Spinner, just you look here, old fellow.”

“Where?” said Spinner, first gazing vacantly all round, and then peering with a comically inquiring expression at the captain’s diamond shirt-stud.

“No! confound it, not there! into his head—not his heart,” explained the big lieutenant. “The fact of it is, he has been making a fool of himself by showing the most degraded form of jealousy against the major. I believe his heart is a bit touched as well as his head, though, all the same.”

Fitz was endeavouring to get a rise out of Tiptop, which was not a very difficult thing to do after supper; not that the captain ever forgot himself—he never did. The change of temperament or temper was chiefly observable when Fitzmaurice Bateman, out of pure mischief, crossed him in

what he was pleased to consider an argument, or suddenly in the flood of his eloquence, which he found it not always easy to set again in motion. He turned now on Fitz: "You just shut up! confound your impudence! What, in the name of wonder, do you know about love! and—all that sort of thing? You are so full of—of——"

"Give—it—up," said Fitz, with aggravating slowness of tone.

"No, don't!" ejaculated Spinner, with counteracting briskness; "try 'vanity.'"

"I mean gush and sentiment," continued Tiptop, solemnly; "and such a flabby description of it, that I believe you'd 'stand to attention' before a petticoat on a bush."

"I don't quite see the point just yet," said Fitz.

"Nor I," said Spinner, putting his hands in his pockets, and getting up a look of interest; "but there is something in it, no doubt."

“It is a literal fact,” went on Tiptop; “you always remind me, somehow—excuse me if I am too personal——”

“Oh, don’t stop to apologise! push on, drive ahead.”

“Well, of the fellow in the piece of poetry—don’t you know——”

“Hanged if I do!”

“This is becoming more interesting and more mixed every moment,” remarked Spinner, parenthetically; “put the question, now you have fully stated the case. Bateman isn’t a witch or a wizard. Don’t be too hard on him.”

“You’re about right there. He has an idea that he can argue. He not only sticks the cart before the horse, but he expects me to get inside the animal and drive the vehicle with the reins at the wrong end.” At this point both Spinner and Fitz laughed. “If you go on interrupting a fellow in that stupid way,” re-

monstrated the captain, "how am I to explain myself? I was about to say that Fitz reminded me of that fool of a poet who was given to kissing a jackass instead of a woman, and then told all about it in—in—verse: Cowper, or Kirke White, or Wordsworth, or Martin Tupper—don't you know?"

"Peter Bell, you mean," said Spinner, in a soothingly sympathetic voice; "I see it all now—of course."

"Peter Bell!—exactly," exclaimed Tiptop. "If you weren't cocked, you'd see it too, Fitz."

"But Peter Bell wasn't a poet."

"Well, he had something to do with the thing."

"Very little, excuse me, Tiptop—really almost nothing," interpolated Spinner, perplexingly; "it was an idiot boy who was guilty of that act of flagrant bad taste, and Wordsworth was the poet."

"More mixed than ever, old chap!" exclaimed Fitz, slapping the captain on the back a little more roughly than was agreeable.

"Never mind," said Tiptop, turning suddenly on him; "you remind me of the whole blessed lot combined—Peter Bell, and the idiot boy, and the jackass, and Martin Tupper, and Wordsworth—or whoever it was."

"Softening of the brain!" suggested Fitz in a solemn tone, turning to Spinner and tapping his forehead.

"May as well give it up," said Spinner. "Let's call it a draw, and we'll all go and have a final hop. You mind and turn your partner the wrong way for a round or two, Tiptop, and you'll be all right in the head again in no time. Try Miss Tibbins, I'd advise you. She'll tread on your toes, and wake you up like a bottle of smelling-salts, if you feel a bit giddy."

“Oh, I’m all right, thanks!” said Tiptop, putting on that solemnly sweet expression of countenance which a man assumes when he wishes to convince himself of the fact of his being so, notwithstanding a slight doubt to the contrary.

They left him suddenly to his own devices. He adjusted his eye-glass, pulled himself together, and thought matters out a bit before starting in search of a partner. The idea that Tynte contemplated matrimony was more than he could well get over.

“Another good man spoiled!” he muttered, —“another good man spoiled! Gone wrong tee—to—tally!”

In the next chapter we may be better enabled to let the reader into the secret of how far Tiptop was justified in his conclusions; and whether the dire event was near or remote, or indeed likely to occur at all.

Meanwhile the captain, letting the glass drop suddenly from his eye, followed the suggestion thrown out by Spinner, and went for Miss Tibbins with amazing energy; to the great delight of that young lady, and of her mother the Lady Mayoress of Westerly.

CHAPTER X.

TENDER.

“God wot !

We had never made good lovers—you and I.

Yet I could wish your love

Had not so lightly chosen—because I hate you not.”

—SWINBURNE.

“Nescio quod certe est, quod me tibi temperat astrum.”—PERSIUS.

“I FEAR it is impossible, Major Tynte,” she said, “that I can give you a more favourable reply. Am I to take it as a special compliment, or quite the other way, that this pronouncement has been postponed to the very last moment? Why, again, do you speak so depreciatingly of yourself, when self-interest would seem to prompt a totally different tone? In the first and foremost place, understand that I *don't* think you unworthy; and in the

second and subordinate place, I merely meant to convey simply my idea that, although your regiment has been quartered here for so long, it does seem strange that you should have postponed this declaration till now—just when chance presented a favourable moment, and on the eve of your departure on a dangerous service which may result in——”

“My death,” he said under his breath.

“I admit all that, Miss Harman, and——”

“Not necessarily your death,” she replied.

“But if I survive——”

“Then comes the proverbial fickleness and forgetfulness of the soldier.” She looked up suddenly, with an expression half of mirth and half of sympathetic sadness.

“Well,” he replied, “all repudiations of fickleness are worse than useless where a belief in it exists. Time alone can set me right in your estimation, and time will do it.”

“But I leave it to yourself, major,—does not this whole business look like it, or like caprice, if you prefer the word? Is it not a mere chance that I have heard all this? Do I not owe it all to accident?”

“I admit, indeed, that I have been a laggard in love; but at all events you will do me the justice of believing that, on my honour, I have never given another woman the opportunity of rejecting me—as you have done.”

“I do honestly believe you,” she answered, with a frank and not unkind though utterly unemotional look.

Was this indifference altogether assumed? He asked himself the question without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion.

“Even that is a sort of comfort,” he said, with a sigh, and an anxiously inquiring look.

“I am glad of it—really glad; but at the same time you must, as a man of the world

and a soldier, give me credit for an unusually large stock of womanly credulity."

"Why? Is not a soldier, then, to be believed upon his simple word of honour? That speech is hardly generous, Miss Harman."

"Nor is it fair of you to put before me, so unexpectedly, a general proposition which admits of only a qualified rejoinder, and then expect the answer to fit in with a particular case."

She puzzled him.

"You speak in riddles," he said, looking full into her open countenance. "Would you have pity, and explain?"

"What I mean is, that you asked me to say *Yes* or *No*, and were liberal enough to allow me to take my choice; when I exercise this privilege and say *No*, you are displeased and hurt. Why should you claim or expect any other answer? Up to a few moments ago I had not the smallest idea—

so well did you keep the secret—that you had actually paid me the great compliment of considering me worthy to fill the proud position of being your wife.”

“You are cruel,” he said, mournfully; “I did not think you could be.”

“Ah, no!” she replied, “I am not speaking sarcastically, major; but when a man acts the part of a misogynist before the world, and with the wide experience of the sex which you must have had, comes to the hasty conclusion that he has found one who is able to storm the citadel which others have assaulted in vain, must not that one feel flattered?”

“Do you then doubt the depth or sincerity of my conviction?” he asked, with so honest and so pained a look that she could only in pity make one response.

“No, no! Not for an instant, believe me, Major Tynte, but——”

“You would then still qualify your faith with—buts.”

“Be reasonable, be even commonly just,” she said; “I don’t believe in women any more than you do, but—I am a woman.”

“One in a thousand!” lamely interjected the major.

“Sch!” she replied. “Instead of being so in any flattering sense, I should deserve to be considered more base than the worst of them, if what I said was uttered with a view to self-laudation. No. I pride myself, major, on being somewhat a judge of character. I flatter myself that I can tell it by the face, by the hands—even by the back sometimes. This may be an altogether fatuous idea; and some day, I daresay, I may find myself woefully mistaken, and all my pet theories violently uprooted. I may be awakened to some huge error of judgment—slowly perhaps, but not the less surely.”

“I wish I had heard all this months ago.”

“Why?”

“Because a catalogue of my faults enumerated by you would have been valued by me. But there is presumption in the idea that you should think me worth even the most superficial study.”

“Not at all; and as a simple matter of fact, I have studied you.”

“Too impartially, I fear,” he said despondingly; and looking up, their eyes met.

“Why should you surmise that? Men are not usually so self-depreciatory and modest.”

“I judge by the unerring logic of facts, which says that I am rejected. And yet, Miss Harman, believe me that your power of discernment, your insight, is not yet perfect, or you would have divined something of the depth of my devotion.”

“I only profess character-reading — not

thought or sentiment reading—major; and I am not, I acknowledge, a proficient even at that. Do not blame me.” She spoke with something so sweet in the shape of a smile, that if her error had been greater he would have forgiven it. “Sentiment and character are two such very different things. The first only obscures the other—overmasters it, rules it, and makes blind votaries or blinder dupes. A mind evenly balanced should be above the baneful influence of—of—sentiment. Some people call it love. What has happened in your case? Am I to believe that you are moved to the very depths of your soul by casual intercourse with me—with a woman who has no great mental endowments, and devoid of beauty?”

He could not make her out or understand her in this mood; but he stopped her suddenly, and would not permit any more self-depreciation. She should not be made little of in his presence, even by herself.

“You are not a fair judge of your own great merits, Miss Harman. At all events, I only know that you are to me all that——”

“That’s sentiment and not character,” she said, interrupting him.

“Perhaps so,” he said, blundering on.

This was becoming too sombre and tragic for a public ball-room, and must be stopped.

“My veneration——”

“Good gracious!” she exclaimed, with a laugh just loud enough to convey to an inquisitive passing couple an impression that the conversation was of the usual frivolous description, “you surely don’t mean by the use of such a word to imply that I am really to be counted among the antiques! You could hardly be so ungallant as that.”

“Ah!” he sighed, sorrowfully, “I was not alluding to age. You must excuse me if I stumble somewhat, being such a

mere tyro in the intricate paths of love. My footsteps are unsteady from want of practice."

"Well, frankly, I do excuse you," she said, with renewed kindness of tone. "Indeed, I feel that I ought even not only to apologise myself, but to thank you. Love will account for the wildest eccentricities, else why should a man with a profound sense of the beautiful in nature and in art be so deeply moved because he has not become the immediate possessor of a commonplace woman, some years past her 'teens,' with a *retroussé* nose, red hair, and——"

He was pained. "I must be rude enough to stop you—peremptorily," he said; "you must at least allow me freedom to hold my own opinion on——" he was going to say *an open question*, which would have been another blunder.

She laughed. "Why, that's just what, in the same breath, you want to prevent me

from doing. Confess now, honestly, the hair is red. Ah! you have taken time to think, and to count the cost. If the point had been put to the vote in the regiment, you know you would have stood in a glorious minority of one."

He remembered the words of the big sub and sighed; but he braved it out from downright conviction.

"Even then I would have been right. It is not red. I would maintain this opinion against any odds."

"You should have said conviction, not opinion, as leaving less room for self-rebuke. However, I am sure you would maintain it, major, just as you would sustain your reputation when called upon to lead a forlorn-hope; but this only shows that infatuation can make one even colour-blind. You are too prejudiced to be accurate."

"Ah, Miss Harman!" he pleaded, sadly, and remembering his own remark to Fitz,

“do not banter, but have mercy ; I am in no mocking mood.”

“Nor I either, believe me. You forget that when you put to me a most momentous question I answered it ; there was no mockery in that. Suppose we change the subject. You have no right, of course, to demand of me any explanation of my reasons for rejecting your flattering proposal, nor have I any right to question you ; but it did seem strange that you should have kept the secret so well and so long ; and I, thoughtlessly perhaps, gave expression to that feeling.”

Was it to be wondered at ? Surely not. What an utter idiot he had been all this long time back ! Not only had he kept the secret absolutely from the one person to whom of all others he should have confided it, but he had stupidly tried to keep it a secret from himself—afraid to entertain it or believe in it. Yet it was an open one among his brother officers ; and even the obtuse Fitz-

maurice Bateman, who was not credited with extra nicety of mental vision, or accuracy of social perspective, had "spotted" the whole thing (as we already know) without having gone much out of his way to discover it.

All this rose up now and loomed large before the major's mind, and stood out in bold relief against the sombre background of his misgivings. The ready tongue of the voluble lieutenant, backed up by his Hibernian impetuosity, would have got over all the disadvantages of natural brogue, and have carried the inmost citadel by storm, while the major merely lingered at the ramparts and exposed himself to assault. He felt all this keenly now. Hope had taken wing. He was dumb.

So aggravating was this silence, and indeed so embarrassing, that Lavinia impatiently began to pat time to the music with her foot, waiting for him to break it. At last she had to help him on as best she could.

“Of course, major, I shall always take the liberty of calling you a friend, and considering you a true one; and—will you call me the same? Perhaps I have no right to ask, but you would not call me an enemy—quite?”

This was said in the pleasantest and most kindly bantering of tones; but the major looked silently into space. She dashed on again with the vehement recklessness of despair—he was looking so forlorn.

“I am really very, very sorry. But what reason had you to hope for more than this?” There was a tremulousness in the voice. Was it pity? or if not, then what?

“I must honestly confess,” at last admitted the major, “that I had absolutely none. I do not blame you in the least.”

“Blame! Oh no; that would be too”—she was about to say *absurd* or *ridiculous*, but checked herself in time—“too unjust. The suddenness of the whole thing is so

utterly foreign to what I conceive of your character, that I can't look on it as serious. You remember what some great soldier said of one of the adventurous things done by a British troop or company or regiment—'It is magnificent; but it is not war.' Your offer may be very flattering to me, and I honestly confess that I feel it so: there is not a woman in the world, I should think, who would not. Well, it may be all this; but we expect to be courted. Love at first sight we can understand and appreciate too. But you, major, cannot plead this; for it appears that while you have taken some months to make the discovery, you at the last moment spring a mine and are hoist by it."

This speech in its ending wounded; it seemed to be wantonly, recklessly cruel, notwithstanding her disclaimer. He sighed—merely that; but there was such a mournfulness in the sigh, approaching

almost to despair, that she silently rebuked herself.

“We shall soon say ‘Good-bye,’” he said.

She could not tell how it came about, this change in her towards him; but suddenly the first chord was struck, and its mysterious vibrations thrilled through her frame. The mine was sprung indeed, and she herself had sprung it. If the major only knew that victory was within his grasp! But he did not. The feeling was new and peculiar. There was a fluttering about her heart that gave indications of a sensation most puzzling but not unwelcome. Her voice changed altogether, and gained now in softness what it lost in pitch.

“You will forget me—forget all this,” she said, “in the excitement of war and the pursuit of fame.”

“I do not pursue fame,” he replied, with a half - contemptuous, half - despairing shrug; “nor do I value it.”

“You can afford to despise it,” she said; “but for me to do so would be to imply that I hold in light esteem the qualities that win it.”

“It is won too often by favouritism, by blind chance, or by a fortunate accident—all quite outside the merits of the individual.”

“That may be,” she said; “but always to me fame—real fame—deserves regard. It seems to have in it that quality which is the nearest approach to the immortal. It is the earthly shadow, as it were, of eternity. The fame of Wellington lives while the world survives.”

“True; but if the soldier’s god is glory, as people too often believe it is, honour and dishonour may simply come to be judged by the standard of mere success or failure—a hazardous issue on which to stake it. You say I will forget you. My only hope is that in the excitement of battle I may, for a time, forget the vision, the false hope, which I

foolishly conjured up. I see now clearly, Miss Harman, how unhandsome it was on my part to seek, at the last moment of my departure, to win a heart which, if I had succeeded, the chances of war might doom to sorrow and to years of grief. It is better as it is. I am glad, for your sake, and I must ask to be forgiven. You won't deny me that satisfaction?"

"No, ah no!" she said, speaking low. He took her hand in his. "It is easy to forgive where the fault is so flattering."

Her voice was tremulous with emotion; the strain had been too much—she had been acting too long.

She turned as if to look out upon the empty street, but in reality to hide her momentary embarrassment. Why was there such magic in his touch, and why did the pressure of his hand thrill as hand had never done before? The question passed through her mind, and as it sped, she tried to answer

it by assuming that it was because of its association with the farewell of a pleasant acquaintance.

A mere make-believe, this halting make-shift of an explanation : it would not deceive any woman—it did not deceive herself for a moment. The process of introspection was rapid and conclusive.

Forgiveness ! If he had, there and then, madly clasped her to his breast, in full view of the whole assembly, she would not have fainted, she would not have screamed, nor gone into hysterics—nay, she would not have been ashamed, nor reproved him for the action, nor heeded the comments of the company, or its ridicule : with her head upon his breast she could have proudly borne all.

It was her business now to recover herself, and she did so by an effort. “I do,” she said, “freely and fully forgive, because I believe you to be a noble, honest, generous,

chivalrous soldier; but why—oh, why did you not speak to me before?"

"There is no time now," he replied, "save for apology and farewell. Let us seize the moments—look!"

Georgie Collyrium was bearing down on them full sail—suspecting that there was something up.

"You will retract the *no*," he asked, in an eager whisper, "even though you withhold the *yes*?"

"I will retract it," she answered, with a look more eloquent than speech; "let us wait."

And then they glided away to the music of a most delicious valse—the last on the programme—just as Georgie arrived to rally them; a valse to be afterwards preferred by Lavinia to any other that had been or ever could be composed.

There are differences of opinion on all subjects, and the same valse was one which

Georgie did not think anything of—I know this for a fact, because she did not dance it; and I had therefore a good opportunity of hearing her opinion as I stood by her side in the recess just vacated by the major and his partner. The truth was, that at this very ball Georgie had come to the fixed determination to waste no more chances, and to trifle with no more opportunities. Time was when she used to be obliged to split dances—giving half to one partner and half to another—in order to satisfy the demands of all. Now there was an ominous change. If the army failed her, she must try the church; and failing these two professions, she must set her cap at a mere layman; for she shuddered at the idea of becoming a cross and wrinkled old maid.

CHAPTER XI.

BLOWS.

“But who his private character can blame,
He served the Crown.”

—CHATTERTON.

THE brilliant assemblage which has taken up so much of our time broke up at last, as the band struck up the familiar strains of “God save the Queen.”

To avoid the crush, Tiptop, Fitz, and the other familiar spirits “of ours,” after having duly performed escort-duty, crossed over to the other side, to light cigars and pipes, preparatory to a brisk walk to barracks.

“I don’t see the major,” said Fitz; “we must wait.”

“I do,” said Tiptop; “there he is—last out.”

They watched him with various degrees of interest, made up of regard and curiosity, as he slowly emerged from the doorway, aunt Polly on one arm and Lavinia on the other, and conducted them to their carriage.

“Look!” ejaculated Spinner. “Why, he is actually radiant. I’m sure she has proposed for him.”

“Oh, nonsense!” retorted Fitz; “it’s the gas, or the supper, or both.”

Tiptop shook his head despondingly. “Let’s be off,” he said; “he’d rather we went. I don’t like to think of it; it’s too sad. Come on.”

“Under the circumstances the discourtesy will be pardoned,” said Spinner. “I second the proposal.”

Acting on the suggestion, the party started off at the double, and were soon out of sight.

Lavinia’s carriage was the last to leave. The major remained so long talking through the window, that he had to make apology to

aunt Polly, as he buttoned his overcoat, for keeping her so long in the cold. At last a start was made.

The major was walking leisurely, and alone, along the silent street. Distant sounds were borne to him on the still air, but he heeded them not till, turning round a corner, he found himself violently cannoned into by a person going in an opposite direction. The shock was severe, but the major, being the heavier weight, stood his ground, while the other came to grief—being only a street boy of slender build.

“You’re not hurt, are you, old chap?” he inquired, lifting him up.

“No, sir ; major, please, sir,”—breathlessly ignoring the catastrophe, to come to more interesting business, that which a boy’s soul loves,—“there’s a jolly big row at the bottom of Ship Street, major, and two bum-bailiffs has got hold of a sodger belonging to the 201st, and—and—I was going after a cor-

poral's pick-kit, sir, that went up here a while ago, to see and have a rescue. The bums is maulin' of him fearful, sir; there's a couple of 'em, and they just tipped Jack, the sweep's son, a bob to fetch the police."

"Here's a bob for you," said the major; "off you go for the picket, like a shot! Come back for another to-morrow. You know me?"

The boy didn't wait, but disappeared like lightning. So did the major, full speed, and alive to the sounds now, which he followed as best he could—for the scene of the conflict was not stationary. He soon put in an appearance, however.

A swaying crowd of some dozen persons surged and bumped and jostled one another round about a knot of belligerents—two black and two red, two "bums" and two soldiers—watching the fight, but keeping out of danger. A shout of welcome from the mob greeted the major as he dashed

in among them and cleared a passage by upsetting a spectator with each arm. The army was popular, as we know, in Westerly ; so was he. He did not hesitate nor falter ; he did not pause to calculate the probable consequences, military, legal, or otherwise ; it was enough, on the impulse of the moment, for him to see the scarlet and blue familiar facings in jeopardy, and to know that the wearers were in difficulties.

His was that peculiar temperament of which 'most of us have met specimens. To superficial observers he was calm, cold, emotionless, some would even have said a hard and a calculating man ; but he was in reality the very reverse. He was naturally passionate, hot, impulsive to a degree, but he was withal a man of the most absolute self-control and mental discipline. Lieutenant Bateman had once given it as his opinion that if the major's hat were blown off in the street he would calmly

stand uncovered, and let it be run after by somebody else, instead of fatuously dodging about after it himself; and there are few who could do this. The lieutenant went farther; for he firmly believed that if the three or four inches at the end of the major's umbrella got broken off by any chance—say a twist in an area grating—he was the only man, not only in the regiment but in the army, who would (unless out of bravado or for a wager) walk down Regent Street with the maimed and disreputable article under his arm. Bateman declared that he himself would lay it down and run away from it; Spinner's alternative would be to leave it in a shop and ask some one to kindly take charge of it; but it was unanimously agreed that the major was the only man whose coolness and unconcern would carry him through and over the difficulty of this terrible social contingency. And if any of our dear readers

should (which heaven forefend!) find himself in such a fix, he will acknowledge the force of the point made by the lieutenant; for if there is a disreputable article to be seen it is an umbrella in the state which he described.

But notwithstanding all this apparent coolness, the major was a man of fire, quick as tinder; but he could at all times keep down the smouldering heat. When he chose to let it free it blazed to some purpose. Just now the dampers were out and the furnace in full blast on the instant. Prudence was thrown to the winds as he rushed in.

Just as he broke his way into the centre of the ring, the larger of the two civilians held a soldier by the throat; and driving him backwards with great force and giant strength, he dashed him full against the broad chest of the major, who was just in time to save the soldier from an ugly back

fall, and to plant a tremendous blow full in the face of his antagonist, who let go his hold, reeled, staggered, and fell. There was a frantic shout of delight from the impartial spectators. The remaining two combatants, who were at close quarters also, fell over the legs of the prostrate man, the soldier (whom we introduced to the reader in a previous chapter) being uppermost.

The battle raged furiously for some moments, even the major measuring his length on the ground; but the big soldier was more than a match for his opponent, and so was the major. The second soldier was apparently hurt and knocked out of time. Things became so mixed, hot, and exciting, that the mob yelled with delighted enthusiasm as they made way, and closed in again, and pushed and jostled one another.

But there must be an end to every enjoyment. There arose a sudden cry, "The picket! The picket!" The tramp of men

“at the double” came nearer and nearer, and the contest was soon terminated. “Here, corporal,” shouted the major, “get these two men out. Clear the way, boys, like decent fellows. That’s right. March them off to barracks at once. I’ll be up after you.”

“You’ll pay for this,” said the big “bum,” who had suffered most severely, and presented a sorry spectacle — as indeed did the major; “you have effected a rescue by violence, and have obstructed an officer of the law in the execution of his duty, and aided and abetted the escape of a criminal — a betting swindler.”

“I know nothing about that,” responded the major, carefully wiping some mud out of his left eye with a cambric handkerchief.

“If you don’t, I’ll make you know it,” said the other. “I don’t understand none of your damned rowdyism. Yourself and your dandy clothes,—you’ll smart for all this.”

“Shall I?” said the major, continuing the cleansing operation. “It is rather a dangerous game, let me tell you, to lay hands on a soldier under orders for the front. You’re not the sort of enemy we have to meet; and as there is likely to be stiff work at the other side of the globe in store for the regiment to which I have the honour to belong, we can’t afford to spare you a single man. Go home and sleep on the business. You’re not badly hurt after all.”

A general “Hear! Hear!” proclaimed that the advice was considered sound by the spectators. “And here’s your hat, sir,” said an individual, presenting to the bailiff a head-covering battered out of all shape.

The owner looked at it with such a desponding expression, that he was told to cheer up. It was all right, and what the swells call a “crush hat.”

The owner's retort was not civil—which is hardly to be wondered at under the circumstances.

"You'll smart for it," he repeated, turning again to the major, "or my name's not Jem Crozier."

"Good man, Crozier!" said a bantering voice in the rear. "I say, holloa! here's a bobby."

And sure enough there was—a cool and imperturbable one, who sauntered leisurely towards the crowd. Seeing the major he saluted, and immediately his aspect, from being jaunty and self-possessed, became official and solemn.

"It is all over, constable," said the major. "A row with a couple of our men. I have run them in to barracks under arrest."

"It is not over," shouted Crozier. "It was nothing but a deliberate rescue. I had a warrant for the arrest of a criminal; another soldier came to his assistance, but

me and my mate would have managed the two on 'em only for this swell drop-pin' in."

"Don't you believe one word of it, mister," said a veracious onlooker; "the major never as much as lifted a hand to him. I was standing the whole time as close as I am to you. He fell his self."

The bobby turned his eyes on the speaker, working them as he might his bull's-eye, without moving his head, but with a doubtful expression. The mendacious statement was borne out with wonderful unanimity by the vast majority of those present. The major smiled, the policeman changed his expression to an inscrutable one, and awaited developments.

"You know me, of course," explained the major, "and the men of the 201st aren't given to running away."

The policeman's expression now said as plainly as if he had actually spoken the

words—"Leave it to me." "Had you a warrant?" he haughtily inquired.

"Of course I had."

"Where is it?"

The bailiff fumbled in his side-pocket, and held out the document, while the policeman adjusted his bull's-eye. In an instant the paper was rudely snatched by an invisible hand, and in the scrimmage and confusion the delinquent escaped beyond the possibility of detection. The bailiff was furious; and as the major walked calmly away, he called upon the policeman to arrest him for assault.

"Walker!" said the policeman; "I didn't see the assault, and there are plenty of witnesses here to deny it." A bull which escaped notice. "You don't want me to get myself into a hole? Go up before the beak to-morrow and take out a summons against him; his name is Tynte. I'm not going to make a hass of myself, if you are."

And he took his departure with a hand in his breast and a dignity of deportment which did him honour, as he remarked, "I reckon you've been and made a nice mess of it."

The excitement was now over, and the crowd dispersed, leaving the disconsolate pair standing in the roadway.

"I reckon we have," said the more silent of the two, "just right down messed it."

"You be blowed!" retorted Jem Crozier; "for two pins I'd knock your head off." Fortunately the two pins were not tendered, so he contented himself with an expression of opinion that his companion wasn't "worth a pinch of snuff; and as for that bobby, if ever I get a pelt at him I'll teach him manners."

"It's altogether in your line, manners is. But he's a civil chap enough, it appears to me. What's up now? What are you looking for, old pal?"

Jem was anxiously feeling for his silver watch—in vain; as it turned out, on investigation, that one of the light-fingered gentry had relieved him of it.

“Well, that is hard lines,” said his sardonic companion, whose value had been so recently over-estimated at two pins; “bad enough to lose the Queen’s warrant, but to be deprived of a walluable chronometer——”

“Ah, shut up, you ape!” growled Jem, as he walked off in high dudgeon.

The major met with no bar to his progress till he reached the barrack-gate. There he found the way blocked—not by the sentry, who was in his box endeavouring to make himself as comfortable as possible, but by the boy to whom he had promised an extra shilling for services rendered.

“You deserve two,” said he, picking out a florin from a handful of silver.

It was accepted with a lively sense of gratitude, and was followed by a furtive

attempt at transfer of a paper, which the boy seemed more anxious to part with than the other to receive.

“What is it?” queried the major.

“Nobbled from the bum-bailiff, sir,” whispered the boy, thrusting it into his hand.

“But you——”

The worthy and promising youth did not wait to be admonished, but decamped like a shot, after a respectful twitch of his forelock.

Tynte made a fair guess now at what the document was, though he pretended to himself that he didn't. From this it would appear that his moral fibre must have been greatly relaxed—a theory which gains strong confirmation from the fact that, having read it, he hastily thrust it into the fire, which his servant took care to have well alight in his quarters when he arrived; holding it over the blaze, with strange agitation, till it was burnt to within half an inch of his

fingers, leaving a fragment the size of a wafer.

“Good heavens!” he exclaimed, “unfortunate chap—always unfortunate!”

He threw himself into an easy-chair, and fell into a brown study, the result of which was that, as he cooled down and his senses returned, he gave expression to a conviction that he deserved to be cashiered for this night's work. It may be presumed that he did not refer to the incidents of the ball-room, but to the subsequent event which we have so veraciously chronicled. It was broad daylight now, and he gave up the idea of bed.

“I hope you got some sleep, Hawkes?” he said, addressing his man, who was busy doing nothing about the room.

“Yes, sir; much obliged, sir,” replied Hawkes, saluting and standing to attention, with a Jack-in-the-box, or rather out of the box, celerity, which would certainly startle

a nervous civilian. "I went to bed immediately after you goin', sir, and slep like a top till two o'clock. I'm all right, sir."

"Good! Just get my tub ready."

"Quite ready, sir."

"Good! Then just run over to Sergeant Powell and tell him to march over here that big soldier who was brought in by the corporal's picket just now; and, I say, Hawkes, I think I could manage some hot coffee—as black as the devil, you know—in an hour or so."

Hawkes saluted briskly and silently, and disappeared, apparently without any misgiving as to his ability to exactly reproduce the correct tint of his Satanic Majesty's skin; a task which one might fairly suppose would present insuperable difficulties to a less confident person. Firstly, because, on the one hand, charity has led us to believe that he is not by any means as black as he is painted; and secondly, because, on the

other hand, modern culture has wiped him out altogether, which is a great satisfaction. I was involuntarily about to say, thank God ! but culture has dealt equally impartially with Providence all round, if I am rightly informed, so that an abstract sentiment of gratitude would be ludicrously weak and pointless.

CHAPTER XII.

EPISCOPAL.

“A subtle disputant on creeds.”—BYRON.

IF Bishop Quodlibet as a boy was for a time somewhat puny, in middle age he became physically a fine man. Notwithstanding his mother's conviction that the food at school could not be wholesome, and that “those Greek roots” were indigestible diet, and would permanently injure his constitution, he lived to mount the social ladder to some purpose. He got his taste for this, to her, unfamiliar *pabulum* from his father, a studious country parson; and his bone and muscle were inherited from the yeoman class to which his mother belonged. She,

good soul, died with the mystery of Greek roots unexplained, having searched several cookery - books and questioned the green-grocer in vain ; for her husband was an austere enwrap bookworm, who would not brook interference as to his mode of bringing up the boy, and angrily resented having to answer questions. He was utterly devoid of humour ; and even if he had not been, Greek roots were to him a solemn subject, about which there could be nothing comic.

Once in a weak moment the anxious maternal soul contemplated the idea of writing to the wife of the head-master on this question of diet ; but only for a moment—she was too much in awe of her little, withered, old chip of a husband to venture ; being submissive, unlearned, and unimaginative, but full of affection, as, thank goodness, most mothers are.

The Bishop always spoke of her as “a departed saint” ; and on solemn occasions,

when called upon to address meetings of women in the varied stages of his career (between his first curacy and the mitre), he never neglected an opportunity of referring to her in warm and glowing terms of the deepest affection, which superinduced tears, and resulted in pocket-handkerchiefs—just as genial moisture brings flowers into blow. She would have blushed, perhaps, to hear him, for she was modest to a degree. But some of her chiefest merits he had possibly forgotten, or did not choose to mention, as hardly worthy of note.

How proud she was of her amateur tailoring, for instance, when she fitted on the youthful son and heir that mysterious garment which contained, in combination, the elementary qualities of a waistcoat and a trousers! Strange, too, that, remembering so many things, the man should have forgotten the delight with which the boy contemplated the row of buttons that ornamented

its front. Little did she dream, good soul, of the more complex sartorial difficulties which surrounded the construction of the episcopal small-clothes and gaiters, to say nothing of that wonderful black waistcoat without any buttons at all, which the child of her affections was destined not only to wear but to adorn. If she could only have guessed, for five minutes of her inglorious but virtuous existence, that her boy was destined to become a bishop!—well, Providence is supposed to know its own business best—she might have died instantly of over-excitement. The sudden revulsion of feeling, caused by the mental contrast between a child's bib and a bishop's apron, might have even unhinged her reason, which was not strong enough to go into such subtle points as the application of the "development theory" applied to small-clothes. She just lived to see him ordained, and was proud and content.

On his father's estimable personal qualities, the Bishop, as a rule, was silent. They spoke for themselves, as did his mental endowments. His work, *Περὶ τῶν παραδόξων ὡς προσδοκίμων*—on the probabilities of the improbable, or the happening of the unlikely—is not now much read; but it is known to scholars, and valued as one of research, wealth of illustration, and cogency of reasoning. His son brought his revered remains to the cathedral, and fixed over them a memorial brass on which were catalogued a very long list of virtues. After this came the statement of his own relationship to the departed, his episcopal title, and his college degrees, all which seemed quite modest by comparison.

It must ungrudgingly be owned by unprejudiced minds that Dr Quodlibet was a success. He believed in himself, which is the foundation on which all safe reputations are built. To preach humility and all

that sort of thing, and to cite Christianity as an example, is all very well: there was no firmer believer in Himself than the gentle founder of our faith. If you don't believe in yourself, how can you ask others to do so? Depend upon it, self-esteem, when kept within proper bounds, is a virtue; and to be poor in spirit is, most certainly in this world, the miserablest of beggary. There was about the Bishop a depth of hushed fervency, an awe-inspiring solemnity of tone, which his friendly familiarity of manner did not obliterate, but rather seemed to show out the more clearly: it did not breed contempt but encouraged veneration.

He had gained a high reputation and position as a prelate of great sanctity and much wisdom and learning—how acquired or whether quite deserved are difficult questions, and involved in some obscurity. The element of imposture, whether intentionally or not, enters always more or less into the

construction of every reputation, and has always to be acknowledged as a factor; but to define its due weight is almost impossible. And here is the initial difficulty, because to be strictly just—as we all wish to be—in our judgments and conclusions, it is imperative that it should be defined.

There were not a few clergymen here and there in his diocese who out of the fulness of their Christian charity had the audacity to maintain that his lordship was an “out-and-out humbug” — a revolting statement in the ears of a layman when applied to a Right Reverend Father in God. But none of us are perfect, as I have just hinted, and it is by no means necessary that a man should be sincere in order to correctly inculcate true principles in the hearts of those whom he may be called upon to inform and instruct; and if the Bishop did, according to his clerical enemies, take people in, he did it for their good no

doubt. It is Rochefoucauld, I think, who says that society could not hang together if men were not perpetually the dupes of one another; and it is not Solomon, my dear sir, but Juvenal, who says that few can tell what is good for them, or discriminate between real blessings and the reverse. It is a great privilege, therefore, to have a recognised and duly commissioned authority in these matters, notwithstanding that envy, hatred, and malice and all uncharitableness maintain their footing.

The vast majority of the diocesan males and all the females believed in the Bishop; and he found himself, with much complacency, looked up to as one erudite and deep, whose person and presence conveyed the idea of perfect placidity and happiness.

I am, of course, well aware that there are those who will captiously argue that the dullest intellects are invariably the

most placid and happy. I neither accept nor deny the assertion (for, after all, it is nothing more); but I trust that my reader is such an all-round happy person as by no means to relish the inference or require me to combat it. Doubtless a uniform state of mediocrity is best, as being freest from envy; and if, in this middle state, we can unselfishly be amusing or interesting—like a monkey or a dancing-bear—well and good. These animals are, I dare say, in many particulars superior to the average spectator, and are, I venture to believe, often unhappy in the company they are obliged to keep.

“But this is,” you will insist, “simply the result of over-culture on the part of these animals. Culture is all very well, but at the rate at which we are going what is to become of the commonplace? There will be a dearth of mediocre people to fill mediocre appointments.” No doubt;

but it is a great consolation to feel, with Dr Quodlibet, that such an important institution as the Church will be the last to suffer from such a contingency.

For my part, were I a bishop or anything else in high authority or position, I should, as a matter of mere expediency—if I wanted to be popular—much prefer a reputation for mediocrity: it saves a great deal of trouble and annoyance, and you can so much more easily live up to it. He is a thoroughly sensible man, to my mind, who holds the theory that one should strive to be neither better nor worse than those one meets; for (as he affirms) one of the miseries of intellectual excellence is that nine-tenths of those you come in contact with do not know whether you are an impostor or not. Admitted, say you, that this is right as far as it goes—how far does it go? A fair question; for, after all, the obtuseness of these nine forms the force of the isolated

tenth. Their ignorance is in fact your strength. And thus, if it be true that there are no people who have *no* pretensions, and that the fewer they have the less they can afford to acknowledge yours, it is also equally true that there is a potential power in self-assertion which never fails to place the tenth person on a pedestal composed of the shoulders of the other nine; and, once up, like the Bishop, the position is easily retained.

I do not go so far as to say that one invariably reaches high position by self-assertion—far from it: the Bishop was apparently a modest and unassuming man; but reputation is called for when the position and the office are both exalted ones—he was not only a Lord, but a spiritual one.

Mediocrity may be the normal condition of the masses, and may do very well for persons, but not for personages. We expect more from favoured individuals whose call-

ings begin with capital letters than from mere toilers and moilers; therefore, those placed in authority over us should have by nature, or should boldly assume, distinctive excellences to be put on with their distinctive garments; for, comparatively, these men are to the rest of us what Sundays are to week-days. Even the poorest actor must learn the stage strut, and must dress for his part; and we expect more from lawn sleeves than from a smock-frock.

Be the argument as it may, the Bishop got credit for great profundity. Nothing is so easily believed as what isn't known; and if you tell an ignorant man that you have assimilated a great deal of learning, and are clever, some one will hear the story from him and pass it on, till it ultimately becomes a settled conviction all round, and emerges from the doubtful atmosphere of "they say" into the clearer air of "every-

body knows." Credence, like love, grows by what it feeds on, and faith is self-cumulative.

Anyhow, abstract speculation can add nothing to the fact that Bishop Quodlibet stood high. He was consulted by deputations on every subject, being most accessible, and only asking for due notice and a digest of the matters to be brought before him. This was thought to be very reasonable, considering his high position, and the many calls which must of necessity be made upon his time. The conditions which he imposed gave him opportunity to make up his subject thoroughly ; to hunt (if need be) through books and authorities ; to cram himself with facts and statistics, quotations and arguments, which sent away the members of the deputation dazzled, if not convinced : his head was so small, and yet it seemed to hold such a lot.

He was, as we remarked incidentally, what is called a fine man, fully six feet

in his "stocking feet." Sitting enthroned in his robes on Sunday he had very much the look of a large white rabbit—an illusion which was accentuated by a trick he had of winking with his nose (if I may so express it) in a way peculiar—as far as I am aware—to that animal. His eyes, which were large and brown, appeared to be all pupil, still and deep. His hair was snow-white, cut short, and very thick—which somehow at first sight clashed with one's idea of a Father in God, though why it should I am unable to explain. I know that it was a cause of stumbling to Canon Fungus, who envied his diocesan this gift of nature, having himself nothing but a long tuft rooted at the back, which he carefully divided, festooned over each ear, and then intermingled over his forehead. The Bishop's was a soldier's crop, not to be put out of trim by either shovel-hat or summer breeze.

But these are trivial personalities which

it is not—I willingly admit—good form to notice at the expense of Canon Fungus or anybody else; and the introduction of which can only be excused and covered by the precedent of antiquity. I take refuge on this occasion behind Martial, who has passed almost identical comment upon his friend Marianus:—

“Raros colligis hinc et hinc capillos,
et latum nitidæ, calvæ
campum temporibus tegis comatis.”

How the cap of Marianus fits even myself, I do not care openly to declare—

“Calvo turpius est nihil comato.”

Judged by his standard, I stand self-condemned; but I trust that those lady readers—M.A.’s and B.A.’s—who are learned in the dead languages, will respect my confidences, and the candour of my confession, and not translate the passages for the gratification of mere curiosity.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCHOOLFELLOWS.

“For thou art with me—thou, my dearest friend,
And in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart.”

—WORDSWORTH.

THE measured tramp of footsteps along the corridor indicated to the major that Hawkes had not been remiss in attending to the most important of his master's orders.

The sergeant halted his man at the door, and in response to the major's request, opened it and marched him in.

“That will do, sergeant, thank you. Leave him; you need not wait,” and with a mute salute the non-com. departed, shutting the door behind him, and leaving the soldier standing to attention, while the major,

with his back turned, sedulously poked the fire.

It did not require poking; in fact it would have been a far better fire if it had been let alone. Nevertheless he poked it again and again, raked out the bars, exchanged the poker for the tongs, lifted several cinders, and placed them on the top. Finally he took up a small piece of scorched paper and dropped it into the blaze,—it was the last corner of the warrant which he had previously held till the fire reached his fingertips.

All this was done to gain time,—to let the sergeant out of ear-shot. He and this soldier had been old and warm schoolboy friends, a fact which the name in the now consumed warrant had disclosed to Tynte. Memories of the past were revived, and as an officer and a private could not meet as social equals in the presence of a sergeant, without undermining one of the first principles of soldier-

ing, the major was driven to this small subterfuge, because to meet Hugh Scottowe in any other way than a friendly one was impossible. They had been fast chums at school, and all the obligations of friendship and instincts of a naturally kindly nature were strongly asserting themselves at the moment. He felt, too, that somehow Hugh Scottowe had come to grief,—the chap who had in many an early encounter, both of head and hand, befriended him, coached him in his studies, and backed him in his fights. He had heard some years back that this *quondam* friend put in a claim to the ancient seat of his family—which adjoined Tynte's—and the last letter the major wrote was one based on this report, and wishing him success; but years had passed and they had neither met nor corresponded, and now they stood within a few feet of each other,—one a commissioned officer, the other a full private.

The situation was embarrassing—and that

was why the major wanted the sergeant to be well off the premises before he allowed his feelings to get the better of him : there was nothing for it but to poke the fire.

At last—and even before the coast was clear—being unable to restrain himself longer, he suddenly dropped the tongs, and, straightening himself, faced the tall visitor for an instant, and then “went for him”—laying suddenly impulsive hands upon the shoulders of Scottowe, with an impetus which caused the latter to stagger under the shock.

“Hugh ! Hugh !” he exclaimed ; “in the name of heaven, how is this ? What on earth brings you here in—in—uniform ?” his deep emotion plainly discoverable in the tone of his voice.

“Misfortune,” said the other, with a calmness strangely in contrast with the suppressed excitement of his friend. “Folly, madness—what you will. Some fools would call it ill-luck ; but—no matter—call it any name you

please, I am here as the result. It is well that I do not appear in a less honourable attire—equally subject to the Crown.”

“Do not jest with me, old fellow. For the sake of past and pleasant times and memories, be frank. You could not be a criminal under any circumstances: I refuse to believe it. Tell me all, Hugh. Time is short—very short. There must be much to tell; I have lost sight of you for so long. And now to drop on one another under such exceptional circumstances seems very strange and—almost——”

“Ominous!”

The major shook his head with a kind denying smile. “I did not say so—or think so.”

“Well, there is *not* much to tell—of any importance; and what there is, is not interesting.”

“Hugh,” he said, “come over and sit down. It’s all right: I’ll lock the door. We shall not be interrupted. You must be open with

me. It is most unkind this keeping of distance between two who were so near not many years ago."

"I would not be unkind, Tynte; but I don't care to go into purely personal matters, which, as I said, can hardly be interesting."

"You might, at least, on account of old times, suppose that they will interest me, Scottowe. I have not changed. I am now, as in our school-days, your friend." There was just a slight tone of reproach, which touched the other.

"I believe it!" he exclaimed, warmly. "Forgive me. I feel it—I know it. You were always true as steel. What I should have said was that my past was not edifying: it is simply that of an—an outcast, an adventurer—to use the mildest terms; and I——"

The other interrupted him as much out of kindness as conviction. "You must have changed your nature altogether, Hugh, if you

have done anything of which you need to be ashamed."

"I have—many things of which I should be, and am, thoroughly ashamed."

"Foolish and impulsive, perhaps, unwise things, but not——"

"We have no time for subtle distinctions, Tynte, suggested by your kindness of heart. We are each of us the sons of our own deeds; and the stern fact is, old man, that I am a fugitive from justice—or, rather, from the law, which is not always just. To your strong right arm I owe my present freedom; but it may be at cost to you. My fate is always to hurt my friends."

"Well, if my mind is easy on that score, why need you fret?" said Tynte, in a reassuring tone. "I have broken civil and military law, and even *moral*, for the matter of that, because it does not sanction a breach, even though good should come of it; but if the good comes, I shall be quite satisfied.

My conscience will not prick ; and in the present excitement and high pressure I dare-say we'll pull through. But you must let me believe in you still. Our school-days must not be so easily forgotten. Be explicit, like a good fellow ; because, of course, you *can* explain, and I positively won't believe you bad."

"Misfortune dogged me, Tynte. If you remember anything, you will remember how every school scrape I got into was the result of over-confidence in others. I always followed the lead for good or ill."

"That wasn't a crime," mildly put in the other ; "sometimes it is not even a defect."

"It is worse than a crime, often, in its effects. If a man stands cowering under a northern blast, and can be persuaded that it is only the south wind coming back, and be got to actually believe it feels warm, what would you do with the idiot or say to him?"

"Well, if the credulity resulted in his feel-

ing *really* but illogically warm, would not he be in a better position than the man who was cold but logically correct?" said Tynte, smiling. "There is more behind."

"Yes, misfortune dogged me, as I said, Tynte, after you and I parted. You knew what my ambition was—my one burning desire; how the most intense pride of family was in my blood?"

"We often laughed at it—we boys."

"You did. What enemies I made by it! My ambition was to win back the possession of that place at Scottowe to which I made, on foot, a vacation pilgrimage, which I was told belonged to my ancestors, and which was going begging for an heir—that heir being myself."

"I remember all that, Hugh, as if it were yesterday; and how your grandfather left on record a written statement as to his paternity, and family letters proving his undoubted relationship—I remember it all:

it seemed to us, boy genealogists, conclusive; and in your case the wish was father to the thought."

"It was when my father died I jumped at the bait, not for a moment wondering why he had not done so himself. I would rise to my proper position; have no more to do with shopping and trade; be a Scottowe of the Scottowes—the representative of a noble race, instead of—ah! why talk of it? The bubble burst, the illusion was dispelled; and the reaction—the recoil—almost drove me mad."

"Where was the hitch?" asked Tynte, becoming interested; "could it not be overcome?"

"No; it was insurmountable. My father was aware of, and purposely suppressed the fact of his father's illegitimacy—whether from shame or pride I know not, nor does it matter. The discovery came like a thunder-clap on me, after a rascally attor-

ney had pumped me dry, and there was no more cash to be got. The scoundrel knew the secret all the time, but led me on. He induced me to take up speculative connection with projected companies, to put me 'on my legs' as he said; and, after duping me till even my suspicions began to be awakened, he flung the fatal fact brutally in my face and threw me over—my pride and shame in fierce antagonism. The first narrow escape I had was after the thrashing I gave him. It was a mercy that I did not kill him. He was afraid to institute proceedings against me; and waiting for revenge, he took me in doubly by playing upon my sense of remorse. He led me deeper into the mire. You remember an old schoolfellow, Joe Hinch?"

"Well! A bad lot. We never could discover what his people were, or where he came from. Did you?"

"Never. I only know that if there was

a difficulty about tracing out his beginnings I have none in predicting his end. I came across him again through this same attorney, and got mixed up with the turf, and most questionable transactions connected with horse-dealing — buying, selling, and breeding. I was to make a fortune! Never was there such an utter fool. If a man told me he was honest I believed him; if he said I was a rogue I knocked him down. Things got to such a pass with me at last, that if I would save my honour and my life I must cut the connection and fly. I was in terror of arrest — a coward. The web had been wound round me, and my hands were tied. I could make no stand. Hinch was too clever and cunning. I was simply an utter dupe, inflated with pride, and——” He paused, momentarily overcome.

“The man without it,” said the major, interpolating by way of comfort, “isn’t usually up to much.”

“That depends. If few of us have the gift to see ourselves as others see us, still fewer have the far rarer gift to see ourselves as we really are. We can always deceive others; but we are poor tacticians if we can’t deceive ourselves. At all events I was a proficient in the art, with the result that I got so involved in difficulties, and mixed up with questionable and shady transactions, as to leave but two courses open: I had to elect between being a criminal or a pauper. I had been living at high pressure which could not last; but when I found out the ruffians I had to deal with, it was too late to avoid the dire consequences. For weeks I have been trying to evade arrest under that confounded warrant——”

“Which went up the chimney a few minutes ago,” said the major, rubbing his hands with glee, and with a feeling of thorough satisfaction. “You may breathe

freely now—that's some sort of consolation. A good fellow does not always necessarily go to the wall, though I will allow that he is heavily handicapped often by craft. The thoroughly astute rogue, Scottowe, who knows how to steer his way, will often venture perilously near to what you and I would consider danger."

"That's the devil of it!" interjected Hugh; "and so it was with Hinch. On one occasion when he was arrested, he stood treat to the policeman handsomely, and then took his arm going along the street; so that a sporting young baronet (still one of his principal dupes), who met him and stopped to talk to him, went away with the impression that Hinch was hunting up a big fraud on his own account. It was a case of the looker-on, who is commonly supposed to see most of the game, seeing actually none of it, and being completely hoodwinked."

“That’s just it. And notoriously the safest house to go for if you mean to burgle is the house next door to the police. But did you never suspect this fellow?”

“Yes, when too late, and it dawned upon me that a course which he suggested in a certain transaction seemed to me not straight. He laughed, and met my objections by the remark that I could not expect to pick a pocket successfully with kid gloves on. It was never my intention to pick pockets at all, gloved or ungloved; but I was in the toils, and things came to such a pass at last that there was absolutely nothing left for it but abject flight. He is now engaged in a gigantic swindle, in the light of which all his previous efforts in the same direction are trivial. It involves, as part of the programme, the getting up of race-courses in what he calls ‘maiden localities,’ where the inhabitants are not sophisticated—Westerly being one.

He is really a genius in his way. A bogus company has been formed, backed up by great names too: the ingenuity with which he baits his hooks and angles for these big fish is only less wonderful than the cleverness with which he plays and lands them."

"By Jove! yes—sure enough, now you mention it, we have all got circulars and pamphlets; everybody in the place has. There is quite a commotion, and a lot of our fellows would have gone in for shares only that we suddenly got the route. One of the newspapers has been writing up the whole thing, on the ground that it will be of the greatest possible benefit to the town."

"Yes. He has subsidised it. I know all about it. That was one of the proceedings I objected to. I have done all I can do at the eleventh hour to counteract the mischief, though I have had to set about it in a

way I don't like—anonymously. I have written to the manager of the bank warning him——”

“What? to Pippetly—Harman & Co.'s bank? I am glad of that. I should not like the bank to suffer. Not that I have any stake in it, but I am interested in—in fact, intimate with the principal partner. But, in any case, even if you had not fired the shot, there is likely to be a terrific row got up. The pious people, represented by the other newspaper, are in arms. There is to be a deputation to the Bishop, and things will be made hot for Hinch—take my word.”

“I am well out of it at all events. I am now a common soldier, and it only remains for me to do my duty as a soldier should. All the satisfaction I shall have will be in being near you. You will never have the smallest cause to be ashamed of having known me in better times, though I serve

only in the ranks; and the secret shall remain a secret between us."

"Stuff, man! You must not talk to me like that: it is not kind. I don't measure my friendship by what a man has on his back. I am only a soldier myself, and I am proud of the cloth, be it fine or coarse. Even if you had not been an old and dear friend in the past, take my word for it, that I never know differences of rank when the facings are ours—except of course where the rules of the service demand it."

This was said out of sheer goodness of heart, honestly and with a warm grasp of the hand; and was capped by the comforting assurance that there was luck in store, which—amid the varied chances of war—might mean distinction and promotion from the ranks. "Any way," he went on, bantering, "I won't be selfish, old chap; we'll go at least halves in the danger whenever

we can. You mustn't monopolise. Isn't that fair?"

"Quite."

"But how did you join? You forgot to tell me that. How did you get into the D.D.'s regimentals?"

"Well, fortunately, simply enough. I came across another schoolfellow, and one from whom I never expected a good turn—that wretched Danby. He wanted to desert, and I was anxious to join, so we exchanged."

"Is Danby gone? Well, I really am better pleased than I can say. You have done the regiment a doubly good turn. He gave no end of trouble; and if he had not given us the slip, the chief would finally have had to drum him out. He was the most hopeless drunkard I ever met; and if there is one fad more than another to which the chief is bound hand and foot, it is the temperance fad. By my faith,

Scottowe, we may reconcile all our night's rowdyism and our duty with a good conscience, since her Majesty has made such a good exchange. Of course, I know that, according to the rules of the service, I should not be sitting here, hobnobbing it with one of my rank-and-file. We must keep very dark, and be outwardly strangers after this interview, if we don't want to be court-martialled and all the rest of it. But seriously, though—how about drill? Is there not danger of discovery for you?"

"Not the faintest. I have thoroughly mastered it in the Volunteers."

"Good! That is the chief danger well surmounted."

Scottowe rose to go. "Ah, Tynte!" he said, "it is surmounted—so far as I am myself selfishly concerned; but"—and his voice faltered—"there is a heavy trouble at my heart. I have not told you all, nor—the worst."

The major held his breath in suspense.

“I leave a young wife behind me, who may become a mother. She may die—or both. I—I—myself may get a bullet or a sabre through me—may be killed—may never return to set eyes on either mother or child. How it will end I know not!”

He turned away and rested his head in agony against the door-jamb. There was a certainty that the strong brave man was sobbing like a woman!

“Good God!” said the poor puzzled major, with genuine sympathy in his tone.

There was a pause. “Why, Scottowe,” he said, “this will never do. You have too much of the genuine stuff in you to cave in altogether at the last moment,—to—to—in fact—don’t you know—be knocked down by a blow that—that may never be struck. There are two sides to the picture. You have, as you yourself say, escaped dis-

grace, and that disgrace perhaps would have killed your wife. You will probably come home with a reputation big enough to give her the wildest joy and pride. Look here, Hugh! It's really unkind. You mustn't—you really mustn't give way like that." And, in genuine alarm, he laid hands on the stalwart man, who was showing serious signs of collapse. "Sit down again for a moment or two, and tell me all about it. Of course she has friends to look after her and take care of her."

"She has none," said Scottowe mournfully, pulling himself together with a manifest effort.

"But—but—relatives, mother and sisters?"

"No."

The major tried again: "Father?"

"No. She is fatherless also."

This was awkward. Tynte was bewildered; but, afraid of letting things slide, he made a last shot, in his wild despair:

“Ah, well, a brother—a somebody—she must have—somebody.”

“Yes, a brother; but I know nothing about him. She married without his consent, or even knowledge, and married an adventurer and a pauper, who has had to fly and leave her, in the hour of her need, in order to escape arrest. She will appeal to her brother under terribly unfavourable circumstances.”

The major felt this fully, but yet, in the kindness of his heart, he said, “Pooh! pooh! stuff! My dear fellow, he can’t be an utter brute, surely?”

“Why can’t he?” asked the disconsolate Hugh, whose experience had made him acquainted with more than one.

“Oh, because—he can’t—it’s—it’s—why, of course, utterly impossible. But, tell me, what have you done with her? Where is she?”

“She is here,” was the laconic reply.

“Damn it!” exclaimed the bewildered major. The answer hit him hard. It seemed to stagger him, and to momentarily knock the power of conversation out of him; but with the rapidity of mental vision which comes suddenly to duller men, he pictured this poor heart-broken creature clinging to Scottowe by-and-by, as the troops marched past. This he must prevent, for everybody’s sake. He put his hand to his forehead, moved it slowly over his head, and bringing it down to the nape of his neck, kept it there momentarily as though it helped him to think.

A bugle-call in the square without brought home the conviction that there was not an instant to be lost. The clouds broke suddenly from the major’s brain.

“I see my way, Hugh,” he said; “it is all right. Here! write—write at once—give me her address. Never mind asking questions. I am a man of my word. Your wife

shall have the best friend that ever woman had. Are you satisfied, old chap?"

Scottowe grasped the extended hand and wrung it, after having done as he was ordered.

"It is all right now," said the major; "give me the paper. That's it. Have no misgiving. Good-bye."

He put Scottowe out, by what looked like main force, and so they parted. There was no margin left for further parley.

But what a task had Tynte voluntarily undertaken! How many are there in the world who have succeeded in finding a friend for themselves, much less for strangers; and how many have lived and died without that nearest and best of all relatives? I use the word advisedly, because the closest of kinsmen, after all, is a true friend. When Cowper's servant approached him once to ask for a day's leave, the great man turned in his chair to inquire for what he sought it.

“To see a friend.”

“A friend!” rejoined his master;

“Give me my hat and stick,
I’ll see him too—the first I ever saw.”

I am not in a position to say whether the poet really did accompany his servant or not. If he did, it must have been rough on the latter; and I am quite certain that neither the man nor his friend would have appreciated the company of that extremely staid and sombre versifier. But this is by the way.

Everything seemed to be against the major’s success in the vicarious task he had assumed; but he did not appear to feel oppressed or troubled; on the contrary, he sat down in the best of spirits, and there and then wrote a long and carefully considered letter, which he read through, punctuated, sealed up, and put into his pocket-book, before betaking himself to his tub—in which we’ll leave him for sundry reasons. He

splashes about a great deal, and makes a tremendous noise suggestive of several cataracts, intermingled with the wild grooming of half-a-dozen war-horses, their neighing and the peculiar lip noise of the ostler, all combined.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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